THE

CONVENT AND THE MANSE.

BY HYLA.

What purpose has the King of saints in view?
Why falls the gospel like a gracious dew?
To call up plenty from the teeming earth,
Or curse the desert with a tenfold dearth?
Is it that Adam's offspring may be saved
From servile fear, or to be more enslaved?
To loose the links that galled mankind before,
Or bind them faster on, and add still more?
The freeborn Christian has no chains to prove,
Or if a chain, the golden one of love.

COWPER.

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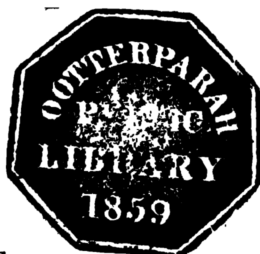
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PREFACE.

If the reader sits down to the perusal of this tale expecting a deep-laid plot of cunning or cruelty, he will be disappointed. Our simple object is to lift a voice of warning, and to show the contrast between the pure and peaceable religion of Christ and that system which is its dangerous counterfeit; and, especially, to bespeak for the humble, deluded stranger such kindly Christian treatment as may win him from darkness to light.

In our mission to this class we are not forced to go abroad for a field of labor; — Providence has brought our work to our own shores,—ay, into our very families. We would remind those who have the guidance of these simple-hearted strangers, of John Randolph's rebuke to the mistress of many half-clothed slaves, when he found her working with great enthusiasm for the down-trodden Greeks,—" Madam, the Greeks are at your door!"

"Christians! Christian women! let not the cause of the Burman, the Hindoo, or the distant Islander, claim all your love, or steal away your pity from the "Greeks" at your doors and in your households.



THE

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CHAPTER I.

"Mourn for the mourner, and not for the dead;
For she is at rest, and we in tears."

The soft light of a southern day was slowly fading. The air was perfumed with the odor of spring flowers which were just beginning to open their soft eyes to see if the old destroyer, Winter, were really gone; and, grateful for his departure, they seemed to have agreed with the birds to celebrate the event with smiles and music, so loudly sang the warblers among the branches of the old maples and elms which lined the avenue leading to a fine old mansion. All nature was in peace or joy; but, how seldom does this lighten, as it is intended to do, the griefs of the human heart!

A group, clad in the deepest mourning, sat silent on the broad old piazza. They had evidently been conversing on some sorrowful theme; for, while the father sat with head bowed on his bosom, traces of tears

were still seen on the faces of his two fair young daughters.

A lady with a shawl over her arm and a black bonnet in her hand, sat rocking herself to and fro, with her eyes wearily bent on the ground; when a tall, fine-looking youth approached her with a whip in his hand.

"Ready, mamma?" he asked. "What, crying again, girls? I shall not drive my mother over again, for it always seems to make you sad. Why is this?"

"Cousin Herbert," replied the oldest girl, "when Aunt Jessie is here we have so much advice to ask, and so many plans to form, that it brings back the past so bitterly!" and she wept anew.

"My child!" exclaimed the father, "where is all your resolution?"

"It is all gone, sir, and it seems as if your departure would break my heart."

"But, my dear Isabel," said the father with a forced smile, "you are not fulfilling your promise to sustain yourself and me too."

"Father, I cannot," she replied.

True indeed was her answer! How can one broken reed sustain another? There was even then a Strong Arm held out for their support, but the father leaned not on it, nor did his weeping children do so.

"It would be very selfish in us, sister, to keep father at home, when we know how soon the sea-breeze would restore him. I am so happy that Herbert is

going too! He is such a kind boy, and such good company he will be on the sea, or in foreign lands, where only *they* can speak English." And the younger sister raised her blue eyes, full of hope, to the dark, tearful ones of Isabel.

"If I could but *know*," said Isabel, "that it were for the best, I would overcome my selfish fears; but, father, if you should become worse in a foreign land and I not there to nurse you?"

"We can but *try*, my children."

"And *hope*, too, father," said the younger girl. "*Hope*, you know, will often of itself cure disease. We will write you long, long letters, and receive such welcome ones from you, so full of good news from yourself; and Herbert will describe all the fine things and queer people you meet with abroad!"

"But, father dear," asked Isabel, "why not let me also go to Aunt Anna's till your return? Why must I be separated from Virginia?"

"Your Aunt Jessie thinks the advantages for education and society too limited for one of your age, in the quiet village where your aunt resides."

"Yes, my love," said the lady, who had sat rocking herself, with closed eyes, during the conversation. "Your father has followed my advice in this matter. Had I not three girls of my own, I would not part with either of you." And the woman of the world cast a look of admiration on her two motherless nieces.

"Why do you not, then, send me to some good

school at the North, where I could be near Virginia? I do not think my mother would approve of my going to a convent," said Isabel, "for I have often heard her speak of the great errors of the Romish church."

"O, my dear child," replied the aunt, rousing herself from the languishing attitude she had assumed, "you do not go there to learn religion; *that* your sweet mother taught you while she yet lived. It is to secure a polite education that you go there. It is becoming very fashionable with the higher classes in our country to send their daughters to convents for education. The most refined and elegant ladies I ever saw were General Gray's daughters, whom I met last summer at the springs. The two eldest sisters were educated by the sisters of the —— convent."

"But, Aunt Jessie, it is so contrary to what I know my mother would think right," said Isabel.

"Your mother, my dear, was one of the loveliest creatures I ever knew; but she had seen little of the world. She was educated in a secluded village, under the strictest puritanical influence. She never mingled with Catholic society, and got her ideas of that church from the history of barbarous times."

"But," asked the young girl, "they do not take God's book for their guide, do they? I believe they think *the church* infallible, and that she can make rules to suit her own purposes."

"I am sure I don't know, my love," replied the lady, "for I never vex my head about the belief of churches. But this I know, that there is not half the

feeling against the Catholics or their ceremonies that there once was. You have strong prejudices against them, but you cannot prove them to be well founded."

Alas! it was too true; Isabel could not *prove* anything. The lost mother had instructed her daughters in the doctrines of God's word, and charged them to abide by its precepts. But they were not exposed to the heresies of the day, and her fears from that quarter were never aroused on their behalf. Had she known that they would be so early left motherless, she would have given them armor for their defence in the evil day.

Mothers, whatsoever your hands find to do, do it with your might, for the night cometh! Give your children not only a true faith, but instil also into their minds the grounds of that faith; for you little know into what hands they may fall when you are gone. Little thought that praying mother that the seed she had sown and watered with her tears would, ere it should spring up, have tares scattered among it. The aunt, under whose partial guardianship they now were placed, had of late become so dazzled by popish rites, such as burning candles, incense, &c., which had lately been introduced into the church she attended, that she could look with no patience on the sublimely simple forms of worship to which her nieces had always been accustomed. Her chosen friends were those who lived entirely for this world, and of late several of them had sought for their daughters.

those accomplishments which they falsely imagined could not be secured outside the walls of a convent. Much as Mrs. Vernon desired to see her children stars in the world, she could not endure their absence from home, even though thereby they might gain the reputation of having been educated at a convent. The mother's doting affection overcame her worldly ambition, and a governess superintended their studies at home.

"You do not think, Jessie," said the father in a low tone, as he drew his chair toward his sister, "that these nuns will interfere with her religious opinions? I have sadly neglected these things myself," he added, with a sigh, "but I wish my children to retain the sentiments their mother held and so beautifully adorned."

"No, indeed, brother, you need have no fears on that ground. She may believe as she pleases for all they care. They will make a polished lady of your daughter, and ask, in return for their labor, not a fair proselyte, but plenty of your money."

"That does not seem just the thing, either," said Mr. McIver, as if thinking aloud, "to care nothing for her belief. I wish from my heart they were both going to their Aunt Anna's, — she is so like their mother. But your plans are all matured, Jessie, so I shall now trust her to your judgment."

"Isabel," said he aloud to the young girl who was in tears conversing with Herbert, "try to feel satis-

fied and happy, my love, and that will make me feel so."

"I will try, father; but why, if Aunt Anna's is not a suitable place for me, cannot I remain here, and study with Aunt Jessie's governess?" asked Isabel.

"You see, my love," said Mrs. Vernon, "that would give me four young ladies to bring out into society at nearly the same time. I should look like a matrimonial market-woman, prepared to supply half the young men in the county with my wares;" and Mrs. Vernon smiled,—but her smile was not returned. The aching hearts of those she addressed had little care about being "brought out" into society, or about matrimonial alliances. They were in no mood for trifling jests.

This aunt was the only sister of their father, and the wife of a wealthy planter;—scarcely past the bloom of her own beauty, and panting to receive again, through her fair daughters, the homage offered at her own shrine in her girlish days. This vain pride of her daughters was the *one great fault* (and who has less?), which at times clouded her many virtues, and made her truly affectionate heart seem a cold and selfish one. From her earliest childhood she had been taught to regard the distinctions of wealth and fashion as supreme: so that, had she not been by nature gentle and amiable, she must have become haughty and overbearing. Without God and without hope in the world, she had reared in her own heart a shrine for idol-worship, and a faithful devotee she was. The

idols she worshipped there were her three beautiful children. They were taught in the wisdom and morality of this world, never in that wisdom which cometh from above. Little wonder, then, that the outward accomplishments and graceful manners of her motherless nieces should seem all in all to her; for, how could she, who had never known the thirst which earthly fountains could not quench, crave living streams for those she loved? The only sorrow she had ever known was occasioned by the death of her sister-in-law, whose husband and children were now about to be separated. But the effect of this loss was very transient upon her buoyant spirit.

A romantic, girlish affection sprang up between them, under the following circumstances. An advertisement for a governess, some nineteen years before our story commences, brought to Mrs. Vernon's neighborhood the mother of these young girls, then a beautiful maiden of eighteen. She was the daughter of a New England clergyman, whose extremely limited means of support made it necessary that his eldest child should go out from her quiet home to seek her bread at the time when most of all she needed a mother's sympathy and guidance. She was employed by a very rich planter residing near Mrs. Vernon, then just married to a widower, the father of one lovely boy. The business of the young girl was to instruct the children of the family in all the usual branches, and also a class of ladies in music, the payment for which latter service, nearly the whole

amount of her salary, her employer received. Thus were his children to be finely educated by fraud,—fraud of the most cruel kind, that of binding burdens too heavy to be borne upon weak shoulders, when he knew his victim was too delicate to utter complaints or to battle for her rights.

Transplanted from a cheerful home whose chief ornament she had been, and from society where she was highly honored, she could ill brook the haughty reserve with which she was treated in her new home. It was toil, toil, from morning till night. No pleasant walks, no cheerful companionship, no sympathizing words of love. The rose faded from her cheek, and her brow became ashy pale, before the leaves of her first summer of exile had begun to fade. The toil she could have well endured, for love made her heart strong; but the look of dissatisfaction, or even the cold word of approval, when all was done, almost broke her sensitive heart. Meek and humble though she was, she could not but see how infinitely superior she was to those with whom she lived. But, alas for the homesick heart! exiled by poverty from home, by poverty must she be held in exile; for great was the sacrifice which had been made to fit her for her present station, and to advance the money to place her there. This last sum, however, her lordly employer had forgotten to refund. Stay she must till this was earned, and enough more to place her feet again upon blessed New England soil.

The impulsive heart and quick eye of Mrs. Vernon

were not long in discerning the situation of her young music-teacher, in whom she was deeply interested; and she resolved at once to rescue her. Her engagement being only for six months, unless by a new contract, she gladly accepted an invitation to reside in Mrs. Vernon's family. This was given, partly for her own sake, that she might enjoy the whole attention and society of Isabel, but chiefly from an interest in the lovely girl. A short adieu to her lordly employer and his indolent wife was all her heart had to offer; but she shed tears of affection over her unoffending little pupils, and spoke words of kindness to the scores of dejected-looking negroes who thronged the house.

Now the hours flew on angel wings, and her letters became more cheerful, gladdening the anxious circle around the hearthstone of the old parsonage among the hills. She was now enabled to send home the *money, little loved*, but *greatly needed*, there; and every dollar carried with it a thousand blessings, which were returned again upon the head of the faithful child.

While in this happy situation, the brother of Mrs. Vernon, returning from a foreign tour, became so much interested in the young teacher, that she was never allowed to return to her mountain home till he bore her there his bride. Mr. McIver was much older than Isabel; a man of strong mind, but of gentle heart. He was wealthy and of high station in society, and hitherto having been quite regardless of sacred things, had lived almost entirely for self. His friends he admired and loved, but they had not drawn

his heart all away from his noble self. Now, however, the time had come when an object dearer than all else was to receive his attention and admiration. Scores of wealthy ladies, from the boarding-school miss to the maturer belle who frequents the halls of fashion, had craved his love, but none till now had gained it. For what would be said in the gay world he neither thought nor cared. Could he but gain *her* heart, that would be world enough for him.

His wealth bore not a feather's weight with Isabel, but he was by far the most refined and intellectual man with whom she had ever met. His fine personal appearance, but, above all, his noble traits, which were dwelt on with so much enthusiasm by his admiring sister, won the heart of the astonished girl. After a very short acquaintance they were married, and with the polished man of forty, as well as with the unsophisticated girl of nineteen, this union was the result of *first love.* It would have been a perfect union, but for one thing. Mr. McIver was a noble man, but he was only a man of the world; his wife was his idol, second to none in his heart. She was a Christian,— God was the portion of her heart, her chief good. The beloved one He had given her took a lower place in her affections than did He. This lack in him was *the bitter drop* in her sparkling cup of bliss; but, as nearly happy as a believer can be with an unbeliever, so nearly happy was Isabel; for, although not himself a Christian, her husband was too honorable a man to oppress or wound the conscience of any.

Now, those holy things which he had been taught outwardly to reverence he began to honor in his heart, not, alas! for their own sacred worth, but for her dear sake who so highly prized them. Life passed joyfully with them many a year, and, with their two little daughters, they seemed a blessed band to dwell on this sad earth. Their pious mother sought to rear her children as she had been reared, in God's fear, and to win by her own holy life the heart of their father from this fading world. Once, and only once, she saw her parents; for, soon after her kind husband placed them above the trials through which they had long struggled, they were called away to that only place where the faithful minister ever receives his full reward, even the crown of life. Neither money nor ease could make up for the loss of their daughter; but the earnest hope that she might be faithful to her profession, and accomplish good in her new home, reconciled them to the separation. Nor was this hope in vain, for many darkened minds received from her loving lips the words of life. Many the kind word of entreaty or of sympathy she spoke to the erring or the suffering; and many the chain she loosened which she had not power to break. Inasmuch as she did it for one of these, she did it for Christ; and from the poor negro she received a return of gratitude which none is more ready than he to give. Here, doing her quiet work, she shone as a light in a dark place, a character quite new to those around her. A young slave, describing his master's wife, closed his

glowing praises by declaring that she was born in the "north star," that heaven of the enslaved.

In writing to her sister, years after her marriage, she spoke thus of her husband: "He is all that I could ask, save that he possesses not the one thing needful. This blessing I daily crave for him, and doubt not he will yet receive it. Let God take His own way and His own time to accomplish that end, *and I shall be satisfied.*" Gentle spirit! God's *way* to perform his work was to tear thee, the idol, from his heart, and His time was at hand; — yes, and when it came thou *wert satisfied.*

The heavy stroke brought the strong man to the earth; but he asked, "What have I done to merit this from God's hand?" The heart that would not bend, was forced to break; for, "woe to him that striveth with his Maker." The struggle was too much for the stricken spirit, and his strength gave way beneath his weight of woe. Then he saw his weakness, and that the odds were too great against him; he sank conquered, but not yielding, a dejected man,—not caring for himself, and willing to be led by any friendly hand. His soul yearned, with an agony of love, over his motherless children: but how to secure their highest good, he knew not. So the task of providing for their education, while he should seek health in foreign lands, was thrown upon Mrs. Vernon, who had ever been a faithful, loving sister to the departed.

CHAPTER II.

"There is a wandering bark
  Bearing beloved ones o'er the restless wave;
O! let thy soft eye mark
  Their course! — Be with them, Holiest, guide and save!"

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." — PSALMS.

How cheering was the first breeze at sea! How joyfully it lifted the dark curls from the lofty brow of young Herbert Vernon, how coolly it breathed on the feverish brow of Mr. McIver, while they could yet see the green fields, and hear the busy hum from the land! But, when the sun began to sink, how dirge-like the wind-notes became! The low moaning of the waves brought back to the mind of the sufferer the last faint sounds of pain from beloved lips, now silent forever. The bounding heart of the boy leaped from billow to billow, while he gazed all absorbed from the vessel's side. In imagination he had already reached classic ground, and was in spirit even now wandering among the ruins of mighty temples, or standing in all the pride of a freeman before the great rulers of the old world. How bright to him was life! Dream on, brave boy! your time for conflicts with earth's re-

alities has not yet come; there is time enough yet to awake to care and sorrow.

The weary heart of our older voyager longed for rest. Doing nothing is not resting; so, seating himself in his quiet state-room, where he could feel alone, he began opening several little packages which had been given him by friends at parting. First came books, the merry and trifling, to drive away serious thought when most of all he needed to feel its influence. Next were articles of convenience or elegance, as tokens of friendship and affection.

"This is Isabel's!" he said, as he pressed the direction of the wrapper to his lips. "*For my beloved father—from Isabel.*"

"*Beloved!*" he said to himself. "I never knew the deep meaning of that word till death severed me from one Isabel, and sickness from the other. I have no right to expect God's care or mercy for *myself*, for I have neither sought or loved Him; but, for them!"—and he covered his face with his hands, exclaiming, "God of their mother, shield my children from every rough wind—from the very breath of unkindness!"

Again, ere long, he resumed his work:—"*Dear father, from little Virgie.*" "I can open this, for every letter smiles upon me, and the memory of the little face I so lately kissed, smiling, though wet with tears, does not break my heart like the thought of Isabel. Virginia may never see her father again, but she will always have a throng of friends. She asks the love of all, by her open, winning ways, and re-

ceives what she asks. But, poor Isabel!—her heart, craving the same love, knows not how to claim it, and few lay, unasked, the boon at her feet. A noble soul, with all her mother's charms—but, O! how unfit to buffet with life's trials! Would that she was safely landed by her mother's side in heaven!" Startling thought! Here was the weak mortal, after having just reproached his Maker, now tempting Him to repeat the blow! He saw what he was doing, and, covering his face with his hands, wept such tears as only a strong man can weep.

He opened Isabel's little package. It contained her mother's Bible. On a blank leaf was written, in the hand of the dead, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Beneath this was written, by his daughter, "*Like as a father pitieth his children*, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."—"Then God's pity must be great," he thought, "and He may even yet have mercy on me." He needed no commentary on that passage. His pity for his own, and the deep agony of the hour, had taught him its full meaning. His heart was with his children; he threw himself upon his couch, and listened to the sound of feet pacing the deck above his head, and to the voices of his fellow-passengers. These sounds were soon mingled with the flapping of the canvas, and then all were lost to his sleeping ear. He dreamed of his children,—that they were folded in his once strong arms, safe from every possible evil, and that forever. But, while he dreamed, the rest-

less wave was bearing him further and further from the fair objects of his delusive visions.

The hurry and bustle attendant upon leaving home served only to deepen the grief of Isabel; so strongly did the merry sounds through Mrs. Vernon's house contrast with the tomb-like silence of her own home since her mother's death. Naturally fearful, and somewhat inclined to melancholy, her loving heart conjured up a thousand scenes of peril on the sea, and of danger and sickness on the land, for the beloved absent ones. She loved to brood over her sorrows, and to remember her lost joys. In all the cheerful merriment which characterized her aunt's family she took no part. Their joys were not hers, but her griefs were her own, and many the long hours she spent alone in melancholy repining. Often, in those sad hours, did she wish for her mother's faith; for she had left a blessed memory behind her, and the seeds of truth she had sown in these young hearts were not entirely choked. Yet, with all her desires for submission to God's will, Isabel did not seek Him with full purpose of heart. Her grief now became her religion, and she almost thought that she merited heaven for being so faithful a mourner.

The effect of the coming change was far different on Virginia's mind. A star could make more light in the midnight sky for her sunny spirit than could the sun at noonday for Isabel. The pain of parting with her parents was alleviated by the full hope of meeting them again, one on earth, and the other in

heaven. Her mother had told her that God doeth all things well, and therefore she believed it. That mother had taught her the principles of our holy religion; and, because it was she who taught and so beautifully exemplified them, Virginia embraced and thought she truly loved those principles. Her whole confidence was placed in her mother. Was *she* not wise?—therefore, she must have known the right path to heaven. Did she not love the souls of her children?—then she could not have led them astray. Thus the young heart trusted; but she knew nothing, in her own experience, like the faith of her mother. Had her lot been cast in a heathen land, the same reasoning would have made her a faithful devotee at idol shrines; had she been the child of a papist, she would have been a rigid Catholic.

The hour of parting came, and, to charm away her sister's tears, Virginia said, "In one short year, sister, we shall meet at Aunt Anna's; you an elegant and accomplished convent scholar, and I a little rustic village maiden."

"In a year, dear Virgie, you will see me seeking a home with you, weary of the meek hypocrisy of those nuns. I was tempted last night to wound Aunt Jessie, and to disobey father, by going with you, after all. What care I for accomplishments? I only want a little room to myself, with perfect quiet; I want to be alone, with only you, dear sister, near me."

"I know your going there, Isabel, is contrary to what we were taught, and I wish Aunt Jessie had

consulted you before she made the engagement. But now, as it is, you certainly must go. If you are not happy, you need only remain a year."

"Sister," replied Isabel, "I am so sure that my going would be contrary to mother's wishes, that I feel, all the time, as if she were reproving me from the skies. I must go; but the responsibility must rest on others. I shall try to receive all the good I can, and do not think there is any danger of my becoming a proselyte."

And thus they parted who were all the world to each other. Life is all too short, and its sunny days too few, to sever loving hearts. Mothers! while you live to do it, keep your flowers bound together, and the wreath near your heart. For the days of darkness are coming, and they may be many.

CHAPTER III.

> "For all his wildness and proud fantasies,
> I love him!"

> "The drying up a single tear has more
> Of honest fame than shedding seas of gore."

AFTER a very pleasant journey, in care of a gentleman going to Boston, Virginia was met there by her uncle and aunt. A few hours' ride, in their own conveyance, brought them to Brookside Manse, where she was most heartily welcomed by her four cousins. In an instant, before she took off her hat, or even sat down, she was at home. But a shade passed over her face as she gazed around the tasteful parlor and saw her graceful cousins; for she thought, if such ladies were reared here, why need poor Isabel be immured in a convent?

Much as Virginia had desired to see these relations, it must be confessed that to her naturally joyous spirit there had seemed but a step between the solemn puritanic parsonage she had pictured to her mind and the jail-like convent. Great, then, was her joy to find herself in an unusually cheerful family, where the parents were the chosen companions of

their children, and the confidants of their youthful hearts. Religion was at Brookside, what it should be everywhere, the spirit of joy; for who so well as the Christian can enjoy all the blessings and beauties which come from his Father's hand?

The remainder of the week on which Virginia arrived was given as a holiday, that the cousins might entertain her with the few little sights and objects of interest within their reach. A merry little waterfall, a cave where they could all sit and partake of a picnic meal, and the cotton factories, were all the "lions" Brookside could boast; but all were interesting to Virginia, and the freedom from the restraint she had feared made her new life delightful to her.

"And now, my dears," asked Mr. Vail, on Saturday morning, "what are you going to do with yourselves to-day? All days are alike with your father, Virginia, but with me this is the golden day of the week. I will propose a plan for your enjoyment. Sam is going into the village for some things from the store. You can all go with him for the ride, notice all you see or hear, and I will try to take tea with you on the hill. Then let me hear from each of you something of interest gleaned during your morning's ride. Will that please you, Virginia?"

"Very much, sir," said the little girl, "and, if it is not out of the way, I should like to see the old red school-house."

"We have none such now," replied Mr. Vail.

The one your mother saw here was replaced by a better one, long ago."

"It was Aunt Jessie who spoke of it. She visited it with my mother, when here. She said it stood on the top of a high sand-hill, and the poor little children sat with their legs hanging down from the high benches, six hours a day, all through the long hot summer. She said the teacher could not instruct Isabel, for she knew the most already."

Mr. Vail smiled and said, "Those days have passed away in Massachusetts. We have a fine school-house and a good teacher, now, for the common branches; but, for the higher studies and for accomplishments, we patronize the seminary held three hours a day in your Aunt Anna's room."

A shade passed over the placid face of Mrs. Vail. Could it be that Mrs. Vernon had ridiculed their mode of life and advantages of education before this open-hearted child? But her heart told her that few mothers in affluence felt so deeply for the intellectual wants of their children, or sacrificed so much as she had done to supply those wants.

"I am so happy," said Virginia, "that aunty is to be our teacher. Were it not for one thing, I should be the happiest child in the world."

"Do you not know, my love," said Mrs. Vail, "that as long as you live there will be some one thing between you and happiness? And they are blest who have but *one thing*; — but tell us what that is, Virgie, and perhaps we can remove it."

"It is the thought of Isabel," replied the child. "Nothing but the wrong impression she had of your home reconciled her to losing me and being shut up among those gloomy nuns. When I write all about your, *our*, lovely home, it will break her heart that she cannot be here to study with us."

"Poor, dear child! For some wise reason God has permitted her to go thither, and He can keep her even there, where doubtless snares will be set thick for her feet."—"Jane," said the mother, addressing her second daughter, "I hope you will remember your cousin in prayer, for she is in great danger."

Virginia raised her eyes inquiringly. Why to herself, as the sister of Isabel, was not this remark made; or why not to Anna, as older than either? There was in this request an implied commendation of her lovely cousin, which Virginia did not understand.

Breakfast and family devotions being over, Anna and Jane went into the kitchen to aid with the Saturday's work. Virginia begged leave to assist, and seemed much interested in the baking operations, which were all new to her. This was Anna's week to superintend the cooking and the table. She tied a blue checked apron around Virginia's waist, and gave her a sharp knife, and a pan of apples to pare for pies. After a glance or two at her white and jewelled fingers, Virginia seated herself on the kitchen door-step, and began her work. Her cousin Sam had followed her, for the purpose of admiring her; but, being too well bred to

stand gazing in her face, he said: "Well, cousin, mother has put you into the yoke very soon, and I have come to assist you." So he took out his knife, and, seating himself on the door-step, beside her, began paring the apples for her to slice. Sam and Virginia were kindred spirits, full of life and hope, and, in forty-eight hours after they met, were like old friends.

"Do you think the black will ever come off, Sam?" asked Virginia, holding up a pair of sadly-disfigured hands.

"I'll see to that," said Sam, "when you're done. I'll bring it off by magic." A noise attracted Virginia's attention, and, turning round, she saw Honora, the one domestic of the establishment, like a fiend with a fiery face, stirring with a long pole the burning embers in the brick oven.

"What *is* she doing?" exclaimed the cousin, who had never before seen such a contrivance for baking. "That looks like the picture of the fiery furnace in a book I had when I was a little child."

"That is what it is," said Sam; "and there," he added, pointing to a long pan, in which were three meek-looking fowls, with wings crossed on their breasts, "there are the three worthies."

Virginia laughed, but in a moment said: "That was not right, Sam; for mother always said we should never speak in a trifling way the words of Scripture."

"O!" replied Sam, "that was only an allusion to an historical fact. There's nothing holy in the story."

"I remember once hearing my mother say that trifling thus would weaken our reverence for God's word, and that, so prone were we to sin, we should always connect the same vain thought with a mangled passage, even should we hear it in God's house."

"Well," said the boy, "I'll try to remember, next time; but, after all, it does not seem so very wicked to me."

The crust was now ready, and the apples were called for. Virginia resigned the pan into Sam's hands, who carried it to Anna, while she stood holding up her stained fingers, and gazing at the white hands of Anna spreading the crust.

"Well, girls," said Sam, with a roguish look at his cousin, "I am going to harness old Bu; will you be ready as soon as the fiery furnace is filled?"

"I am going to stay at home to make some preparations for our tea on the hill," said Anna, "but Jane and Virgie will go with you. Try to remember all your errands, Sam, and take cousin to see old Mrs. Rose; I will send her something nice by you."

"If you want your fingers whitened," Sam said to his cousin, "don't set the color with that soap; wait a moment." He soon brought a piece of pumice-stone, and began vigorously rubbing off the apple-stains from her fingers. This done, she sought the large chamber which she occupied with Anna and Jane, to make her toilet. Jane had just put the finishing strokes to the room, and they were soon prepared for their ride.

Sam brought the carriage to the side-door, and his mother came out with her arms loaded. The basket was for Mrs. Rose, the bundle for Sally Williams, and the pail of milk for old Mrs. McCorkle, whose cow could not be found the night before.

"Dear mother," said Sam, entreatingly, "can't we ride without stopping so many times to-day? You have taught Bu such tricks, that he stops at every poor-looking house on the road, whether we have any 'massy-drops,' as old Mrs. Rose calls them, or not."

Mrs. Vail did not appear to hear Sam at all, but placed the things carefully in the carryall, and charged them to be at home in time for dinner.

"Mother's name ought to have been Tabitha," said Sam, as he drove off; "but, when she 's dead, the poor folks round here can't show the garments she made; for they put them on as soon as they get them, and never rest till they 're worn out."

"You 've forgotten already, Sam, what I said this morning about trifling with Scripture."

"I ask your pardon, cousin," said the boy, "but, don't you really think I have the best mother in the world?"

"Indeed I do, but I am sorry her son is not more worthy of her," his cousin answered, archly.

The ride was lovely, the road, much of the way, lying through a cool wood. They emerged from this on the top of a high hill, and Virginia exclaimed, when she saw the town below, with its spires and public buildings, "O, how beautiful! what a magnificent

view!" But Sam interrupted her by saying, "Now, see how orderly the horse will stop at the house we are coming to. There," he said, as Bu came to a dead halt, "he understood what mother said about the pail of milk,—noble old fellow!"

A neat, plump little woman came out from a very small house on the road-side. "Mrs. McCorkle," said Jane, "mother heard that you had lost your cow, so she sent you a pail of milk."

The sight of the pail brought smiles, but the thought of the cow tears; so, hiding her smiles, and wiping her tears with her clean apron, she said: "Och, Miss Jane, honey, but the cow is the smallest part of the loss; sure, dear heart, Jimmy hisself never came back afther he wint for the ould crather. Och, och, but, sure, I'm the heart-broken mother, swate ladies."

"I don't think you need be so anxious about him, my good woman," said Jane, kindly; "you know poor Jim often stays out all night, and you don't know where he is. But, what will you do about the cow?"

"Och, what care I about the ould cow!" exclaimed the widow, "only," she added, curtseying, "that his riverence your father subscriptioned the money to buy her. Och, och, if my darlint should be drownded! Sure, swate ladies," she said, holding up her hands in the form of a cup, "I cried the full o' that o' tears, this last night; 'dade, I wrung the sheets and hung them on the line, after I got up, to dry them!"

Sam smiled at this hyperbolical assertion, and said,

"But, you did not feel at all anxious, last winter, when he was gone a week in the storm?"

"Well, dears," replied the plump little widow, "you see it's just here,—Jimmy and I had just had some high words about whose of us should go afther the cow in the rain. I bid Jimmy to go, as any mother would; and not a foot would he stir, for all I could say. So I lost my patience, and I took my will o' him. A mother must do her *duty*, dears; so I bate Jimmy till he pulled the switch out o' my hands and broke it. You know that would never do; so I had to bate him till I showed my 'thority. I bate him with the long iron spoon till I broke the bowl off it over his head. Then he put his hands up to his head and cried out, 'I'll go afther the cow, 'deed I wull;' so I was just thinking what a dale o' good a bating would do a wayward lad. But, och, I never saw him afther that, dears!"

"And what do you fear has become of him?" asked Jane.

"Maybe he tuk his own life, thinking that his nat'ral mother was cruel to him in a strange land," replied the widow.

"I'll risk that," said Sam; "Jim enjoys life too much for that. Maybe he drove the cow to Brighton, and sold her. You know he was real good at trading off your eggs and butter, last winter."

"Och, now, masther Sam," exclaimed Mrs. McCorkle, coloring, "sure it is not the like of you, a rale-bred gintleman's son as you are, to be breaking the

heart of me, and killing me twice, by such talk. Sure, isn't it hard enough to lose my darlint boy, widout thinking he'd do the like o' that?"

"But, my good friend," said Jane, "it would be better for you to know the truth, even if it should be painful. You had better describe him and the cow, and ask some of the milkmen to inquire about them when they go into the city to-morrow."

"Och! but isn't this a cruel world?" shouted the widow. "Sure, if Jim is a bit wayward, it is not his mother's fault, poor lad! 'Dade, I've bate him a thousand times till he was all black and blue, particular since the ould man died, for he was very chicken-heart and tinder o' Jim. If he'd had a father to bate him like other boys, he'd a been a jewel by this time. But Dinnis always said he was as good as ony boy, and would niver put a hand to him,—the ould fool!"

Sam could stand it no longer; this last eulogy on the departed Dennis wrought his already excited risibles up beyond the power of endurance, and he laughed heartily, to the great vexation of Mrs. McCorkle. She began weeping aloud and rocking herself to and fro, till the milk rebelled in the pail, and came splashing from under the lid.

"Mrs. McCorkle," said Jane, soothingly, "I feel very much for you, but I have no idea any harm has befallen Jim. You know he is almost a man now, and will not bear whipping as he did when he was

younger. I suppose he was angry, and means to stay away long enough to alarm you for his safety."

"But, sister," said Sam in an undertone, "that reason could not have influenced the cow to go with him. She had no whipping, for which she sought revenge."

"That's true, Sam," Jane replied, softly; "now, Mrs. McCorkle, I advise you to ask Eben Cole to inquire for Jim and the cow, as he goes along the road to-morrow morning."

The gentle voice of Jane seemed like a match to a powder-flask; for the widow replied, with fire in her eyes, "Is it Eben Cole, the rascal? 'Dade, it will be a long day before I ask a favor o' him. Sure, did n't he break the mother's heart in me, only this morning, bad luck to him!"

"O! don't say bad luck to any one,—least of all to him, for he 's one of the kindest-hearted fellows in the world," said Sam, who, weary of Jane's long delay, had broken a branch from an overhanging elm, and was earnestly whittling it.

"What has Eben Cole done to you, Mrs. McCorkle?" asked Jane.

"What has he done, is it? Did n't he call afther me, when he rode by in his masther's ould milk-cart? and did n't he tell me that he heard that a boy with rid hair was arristed this morning by the police, just firnent the ould market, for trying to sell a white cow; and och, Holy Mother! he was sint to the House o' Corriction!"

"O! then you know where Jim is, after all," said Sam.

"'Dade, then, I don't," said the widow. "Sure, there's more boys with rid hair, and more white cows nor mine in the world. And, if it *is* Jim they's got, the darlint, more's the shame on them to impose on a poor fatherless lad!"

"But," said Jane, "if Jim has done this wicked thing, it is right that he should be punished."

"Wicked thing, is it?" retorted Mrs. McCorkle. "Sure it's his own mother's cow, and if he has n't a right to sell her, who has?"

"Well, good-by, Mrs. McCorkle," said Jane, meekly, for she saw it was useless to multiply words with her. Sam touched old Bu — for he never struck him with a whip,— and off they drove.

"I bespeak this precious specimen of maternal affection and sound reasoning for my topic on the hill, this evening," said the boy. "Will you give it all up to me, girls?"

"Yes," replied Jane, smiling, "if you will relate the conversation just as it took place, with the plain facts unvarnished."

"I'm sure the scene needs no embellishment," said Virginia; "but, are you given to such tricks, Sam?"

"My stories," the boy replied, "are all like old-fashioned novels, 'founded on fact!'"

"Now, Jane, you dear, good girl!" said Sam, as he drew up in front of an old red farm-house, whose

best days had long passed away, "hand out your 'massy-drops;' for you must not get out here, you spent so much time in bewailing Jim and his cow!"

"I must go in just a moment, Sam; I have a book for Mrs. Rose, and I want to say a few words to her about it." And she sprang lightly from the carriage, and ran up the rough steps leading to the door. The upper half was left open when she went in, and Sam leaned forward to listen, saying to his cousin, "I want to hear what she says, for Jane can talk just like a minister. She 's almost adored by a set of old goodies, round here; and I expect, when she dies, Mrs. McCorkle will get her canonized by the Pope! There is no Saint Jane, is there?"

Just then Jane and her old friend appeared at the door. Mrs. Rose, holding the book in one hand, and leaning on a cane with the other, spoke kindly to Sam and Virginia,— telling the former, as a great compliment, that he was growing every day more and more like his dear father. "God bless you, my boy, and make you like him every way!"

"Thank you, ma'am!" said the beautiful boy, as, with a blush on his cheek, he ran his fingers through his curly brown hair, that he might look still more like him; for Mrs. Rose and Sam thought alike of the fine appearance of Mr. Vail.

"Give my best love to your mother, dear!" she said, addressing Jane; "and thank her for the jelly and biscuit. Tell her I hope I shan't be left to set

my heart on 'creetur comforts;' for hardly a day passes but some *massy-drops* fall unexpected on my head. Good-by, dears!" And off they drove.

"What an idea!" said Sam, looking round at Jane. "Jelly and biscuits falling on her head! The last mercy-drops I let fall on her head were a bushel-bag of potatoes and a spare-rib of pork!"

"Sam! brother!" said Jane, reprovingly, "don't make fun of aunty Rose! She knows less of grammar than you do; but she can speak one language correctly that's a foreign tongue to you! I often think, bright as life is before me, I should be willing to exchange places with her."

"What! the hobble, and all?" asked Sam. "She has such a peculiar lameness,— a sort of twitch and hop; and, with that constant smile she wears, one would think, when seeing her cross the room, that she was quite delighted with her lameness. When I was a little fellow, nine or ten years old, Ma sent me over there, with my new hatchet, to split some pine wood for the dear old soul. I worked awhile in the shed, and then I began to wonder how she could keep up that droll step I constantly heard in the kitchen. There was an old broken rake near; I split the handle a little way, and inserted a flat piece of wood, and thus made quite a respectable crutch. I then made an attempt to walk like mine hostess, and was just getting her merry step, when suddenly the door opened, and she stood before me. I first thought of throwing away my crutch, and running; but, on second thought,

I held it up, and said to her, 'I've been trying to see how you can walk so. I find it very hard, and wonder how you can always look so pleasant when walking.' Then I told her that when I was very small I used to wish I was lame, and had a crutch; because I considered herself and Joe Hartnell, the lame shoemaker, the happiest people I ever met. She was not at all offended, but laid her hand on my head, and, laughing till tears came in her eyes, exclaimed, 'God bless the boy!'"

Virginia laughed; but Jane said gravely, "I'll give you a verse to learn to-night before you sleep, Sam: 'Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker.'"

Sam looked grave, and said, "You know, Jane, I meant no unkindness. I am always willing to do anything for her, and all the rest of your — what shall I call them? — your old ladies."

"But, I presume, if they knew that you were watching their words to ridicule them, they would prefer to dispense with your favors. This habit of *taking off* humble people, who make no false pretensions, is not only wrong, but mean. A true gentleman never does it, even though he be not a Christian."

Just before they reached the town, the horse, of his own accord, drew up before a house which, from the heads seen at the numerous windows, seemed to be the dwelling-place of people whose name was "legion." Here they left the bundle for the sick child, and soon,

having done their business at the store, turned old Bu's head in the direction which best suited his inclination. An hour's ride brought them to their own little village, delighted with their ride, and eager for the picnic on the hill.

CHAPTER IV.

> Then Ceremony leads her bigots forth,
> Prepared to fight for shadows of no worth;
> As soldiers watch the signal of command,
> They learn to bow, to sit, to kneel, to stand!
> Happy to fill Religion's vacant place
> With hollow form, and gesture, and grimace!
>
> COWPER.

IT was late one evening when a carriage, with two ladies, drove up to a splendid house in Morton-square, in the city of ——. The rain was falling heavily, and the streets through which the carriage was driven in coming from the wharf seemed silent and deserted. The house before which they stopped looked O, how dreary in its solemn grandeur, to the sad young eyes which gazed from the carriage-window, as a dying street-lamp threw its dim light upon it.

"This cannot be the place, madam!" said Isabel; "it looks like a gentleman's deserted city mansion. There are no lights! The people must all be asleep, if it *is* the place!"

"This is the place, my love," replied her companion. "The holy Sisters are probably at their vespers now, in the chapel at the back of the house. This is not a *convent*, but the house of the Sisters of

the Heart of Mercy. Here you will remain a few weeks, till some one comes to take you to the convent. You will here learn much that will aid you afterward, — such as the rules, and the preparatory lessons."

They were now standing on the drenched steps, with the rain from the roof beating heavily on their umbrella, waiting an answer to the bell. The driver took the last trunk off, and, setting it on the steps, took his cigar from his lips long enough to say, "Dollar, ma'am!" Isabel gave the bell another and another pull.

"You had better not ring again, love," said Mrs. Latour; "their first duty is to finish their devotions, and this is just their hour for vespers."

"I think we had better have our trunks put on again, and let the driver take us to a good hotel, before we are soaked through!"

"By no means, my love; the Sisters of the Heart of Mercy expect us to-night."

"Strange kind of mercy theirs must be!" said Isabel. "I should think it wrong to keep a dog out, on such a night!"

Isabel's companion was a very devoted Catholic lady, of French descent. It was in a great measure through her influence that Mrs. Vernon had decided to send Isabel to the convent, and she had volunteered to place her safely there. A long correspondence had passed between herself and the ladies at the convent, in which all Mr. McIver's affairs were laid open before them. They also knew that Isabel's spirit

rebelled against the plan which her father had so carelessly allowed another to make for her in his absence. They knew it all, and their keen eye looked not only to the three hundred dollars they should receive for a year's schooling, but also to the wealth which would come into her hands when she should become of age. The news reached the Sisters of the Heart of Mercy, whose Superior was the aunt of Mrs. Latour. The holy mother wrote to her niece, saying that she greatly regretted she had not first consulted her before pledging the young lady to the ladies at the convent: for, although they did not often take boarding-scholars, they would gladly have done so in this instance. As they must pass through the city on their journey, she pressed a visit from them, hoping that their house might be made so agreeable that she would refuse to go further.

If, then, from their delay in answering the bell, Isabel thought that her coming was disregarded, she was widely mistaken; for every movement, for days, had been with reference to her,— even the delay in answering the bell had its motive.

Isabel was insisting upon going to a hotel, when the door was opened by a servant. The girl stood aside, holding the lamp over her head, and by its light they saw in the distance a tall figure, robed in black, advancing towards them. Like an automaton in mourning, she came forward, without once raising her eyes, and folded in her arms first Mrs. Latour, and then Isabel, pronouncing on each a short blessing. She

then, as if by machinery, turned her back towards them, saying, in hollow tones, "Follow me!" This Isabel was reluctant to do; but she felt sure that Mrs. Latour would not countenance any violence, even though the victim were a Protestant; and, seizing the skirt of her dress with a hold she meant not to relax, she ascended the stairs. At the last step they met another nun, who seemed to have been cast in the same mould as the first, the only difference being in the coloring. The face of the first was white; of the last, yellow. Each now silently grasped a hand of the visitors, and led them into a spacious room, where, in front of a table covered with green, sat an elderly lady, robed in nearly the same manner with the other sisters. There was less of awful solemnity in her benediction, as she pressed Isabel to her heart, and said, in a pleasant voice, "My daughter!"

When they were seated, she questioned them of their journey, and of their friends at home. Isabel expected every moment that some apology would be offered for delaying them at the door; but no allusion was made to it.

After a few moments, the Superior told the white-faced nun to show Isabel her room, as she ought to change her damp garments; and she wished to have a little conversation with her beloved relation before she retired for the night. Isabel resolutely replied that she did not wish to retire until her friend did so, as she intended sharing her room. The nun, however, took

her hand as if to draw her away; but the superior said, with a bland smile, "Be it so, my daughter;" looking at Isabel.

"How strange it was," said Isabel to Mrs. Latour, when they were alone, "that no apology was made for keeping us at the door, for they must have seen how wet we were when we came in!"

"'Heaven before earth,' is their motto, my love," replied the lady; "and *nothing* could be suffered to draw even a domestic from her vespers."

"JESUS," said Isabel, "was always ready to do the smallest act of kindness."

Mrs. Latour was too well aware of her own weakness to argue with the child, who knew so much more of the Scriptures than she did. Perhaps she also knew that the surest way of confirming the minds of some people in their errors is to put them on the defensive; so she only remarked that the rules of their order forbade any earthly occurrence to interrupt their devotions.

"I presume," said Isabel, quietly, "that they would soon break through the rules of their order, if the house were on fire. Selfishness would then overcome bigotry."

The floor of the room in which they slept was, like the rest of the house, covered with green cloth; and the furniture was neat, but plain. The three ladies and three domestics composed the family. The eldest had charge of the house and its funds; she was the head of the family, while the two younger ones taught

a charity-school in the vestry of the adjoining church of St. ——.

Weariness soon brought repose to the young stranger. When she awoke in the morning, she found herself alone; and while Mrs. Latour was in another room, giving the oldest nun an insight into her character, and advising the mildest means to be used in securing Isabel to the faith and her *fortune to the church*, the unsuspecting girl knelt and prayed as her mother had taught her.

Rest and the morning light had wrought wonders in brightening the sad picture of the future for Isabel; and when the white nun came to lead her down stairs, as if she were blind, she felt more cheerful and courageous. She resolved to keep up a faithful watch, and, if she felt unhappy from anything she saw, to return with Mrs. Latour, or to go, on her own responsibility, to her aunt in Massachusetts.

The hand which led her down stairs was stiff and cold, and Isabel was half inclined to believe that a machine, whose motive-power was invisible, had fixed itself upon her, and was drawing her she knew not whither.

A door at the foot of the stairs was thrown open, and she saw the Superior, the yellow nun, and Mrs. Latour, with three devout-looking domestics, in stuff gowns, sitting like mummies before her. The eldest lady rose and embraced her, repeating, in her sweet tones, a few Latin words, in which Isabel understood her to call her a poor lost lamb.

"Why do you call me that?" asked Isabel.

All looked surprised, not only that she understood the words, but that she was not too much overawed to interrogate the Superior. Mrs. Latour thought it the best policy for her to ward off the offensive reply which the lady might make about Isabel's being without the fold of the only true church, and said, "Any child, my love, who has no mother, is a lost lamb in this wilderness world."

"Not if she has a holy religion, to guide her to that mother in heaven," said Isabel.

No reply was made to this remark, but the nuns looked at each other with an expression of disappointment which did not escape the keen eye of Isabel. They saw the independent spirit which had to be broken before their work could be accomplished. With some girls all that was needed was the skill of the artisan who casts in moulds his brittle images; but in Isabel's case they required the strength and genius of the master, who takes the marble from the mountain, and gives to it all of life but the spirit.

"The matin hour has come," slowly spoke the Superior, and all, save Isabel, crossed themselves, folded their arms, and followed each other in Indian file through a long and poorly-lighted passage. A door then admitted them into a little chapel, where, for the first time, Isabel saw the implements (if we may so call them) of Catholic worship,— the altar, the incense, the crucifix, and the burning candles. With a "Hail Mary" and the sign of the cross, they bowed

before the emblem of the Christian faith,— itself, we fear, adored by them more than the Being who was crucified upon it. During the long Latin prayers, which were unmeaning at least to Mrs. Latour and the domestics, Isabel remained apart; for she honored religion too highly to join in what she considered solemn mockery. The nuns either did not see, or, if they saw, did not allow Isabel to know that they noticed, this breach of their order. Matins being ended, they returned in the same way as they came. Breakfast — served much the same as in a genteel private family — being over, they were taken for the first time into the parlor. Here, also, all was green,—carpets, sofa, and chair-seats. On each mantelpiece and table and in every niche were crosses and images. The walls were covered with pictures of saints,— some on the rack and some in glory,— or of heretics in purgatory or perdition. The furniture was plain, but the rooms were far from being devoid of ornament. Rich vases with elaborate carving, massive silver crucifixes, and the like, revealed to Isabel that the extreme poverty in which Mrs. Latour had represented the house and school to be was all a farce. This lady truly believed what she stated. She was a widow, with a fine estate, and a legion of "humble dependants," as she called her slaves. Although a person of very small mind, she was of a kind and generous nature. As a true Catholic, she was much interested in the establishment over which her aunt presided, and Isabel knew that she gave largely towards its support.

She was, however, much surprised to see her present to the Sisters a silver flower-vase, elegantly wrought. She called their attention to the fact that the flowers upon it were an imitation of the passion-flower, every part of which was an emblem of the passion of our Saviour. Isabel concluded that she felt little care now to retain her property, as her only child had slept many a year in its little grave. She could well remember the departed as the beloved playmate of her earliest years; and she now seemed like a beautiful vision, with her dark ringlets, her deep, soft, black eyes, and her spirit so full of the vivacity of her father's vine-clad native home. Then she remembered seeing Marie, or, as she was called, "La petite Angele," in her coffin, and the agony which filled the house, from the parlor to the hut, when she was borne away. All this came to Isabel's mind as she saw the rich vase, and she wished that Marie were here to guide, as she surely would have done, her kind weak mother. Mrs. Latour gave it as a sacrifice to religion; but the words, "Ought this not rather to have been sold and given to *the poor ?*" rose in Isabel's mind, with far more purity and reason than when spoken by the betrayer in reference to our Lord's anointing.

One morning, after Isabel had been some days in the agreeable society of Sister Agatha, she was enjoying herself over some splendid French engravings which that lady had presented to her, saying that they were the property of a blessed young Sister from

France, who died in their house last year. After giving a glowing description of the young stranger, in which Isabel was deeply interested, she asked her visitors to amuse themselves, as she should be much engaged hereafter for the mornings. It was, she said, a time of general sickness among the newly-arrived emigrants, and Father MacRail had more applications for advice and consolation than he could possibly attend to, and had requested her to receive the females who sought help of the Virgin in their hour of need. Then, attaching a long cross and rosary to her side, she left the room, closing the door behind her. Mrs. Latour took her seat on the sofa, and, with a solemn face, began reading her prayer-book half aloud, as if for a wager. Now and then she would stop and make some remark to Isabel about her hair or dress, or the furniture of the room, and then proceed as if she had never had an earthly thought to stain her heart. The young girl stood a long time gazing out at the open window, and wondering when and how she should leave the house of the Sisters. While thus absorbed in her own thoughts, she noticed that every now and then a woman would stop before a black box chained to the railing of the *area*, and, crossing herself, drop in a piece of money. Then, immediately after each offering, the door-bell would ring, and the voice of the Sister in the hall was heard, until the ring of the bell brought a new visitor. Soon a young and pale girl, dressed in full mourning, cast her eyes up to the window with a look which

won the tender heart of Isabel. After she rang, and Isabel heard the door shut behind her, there was a burst of grief, loud and long. Then followed words as if she were striving to talk in her emotion.

The holy Sister made several ineffectual attempts to quiet the girl, who said in a loud voice, "Lady, I cannot be calm; the heart 's broke in me!" This was followed by fresh tears and deep sobs. Isabel could endure it no longer, and raised her eyes to Mrs. Latour; but she had fallen asleep, with her book in her hand. Isabel rose, thinking that at the worst she could only be repulsed, and went into the hall. Her face was the picture of real interest, and tears stood in her eyes as she advanced towards the lady.

"Do tell me, madam," she said, "what is the matter with this poor girl." There was no frown for her intrusion, as Isabel had feared; for was not Sister Agatha now doing her best deeds? and the wider they were known, the better for her reputation.

"We will see, my daughter," she said, taking her hand.

In answer to the questions asked her, the weeping girl answered that her name was Mary Flynn, and that she was child's maid and seamstress in the family of Rev. Dr. Winthrop, where she had been very happy.

"And what brings you here this morning in so much trouble, my child?" asked Sister Agatha, compassionately.

But silence, and the spasmodic choking which tells

of suppressed tears and of the groans of a burdened spirit, were her only answer.

"Be composed, my daughter, and let me know your sorrow," said the nun, calmly, but with a resolute tone which implied a command; "for other mourners will soon be here, and demand my time. What were you at home, Mary?"

"My father was a decent farmer, lady; but, when the years grew bad, and all my companions were coming away, they gave consent for me to come too, thinking they would sell the cows and sheep and follow me by another season. I promised God, on the sea, that if He'd only show me dry land again I'd never call a dollar my own till I'd throw my two arms round the necks of them I left behind me; for the sickness and fear on the sea, lady, taught me what a father and mother was. When I began to earn a little, the accounts got so bad from home, that I had n't the heart to keep one pound by me, as I thought to do, by way of a fund to send for them, and to have a bit o' a room to take them to when they'd land. But I sent it home, pound by pound, as I got it, to keep them from throuble. The cows were took for the rint, and my poor father thried every way to get enough to bring him to me; but every neighbor we had was doing just the same thing, and he could n't raise it. O, then the heart-breaking letters he wrote to me! Then my masther said he'd advance money to pay my brother's passage, and that the twos of us would soon earn enough to bring

the father and mother. When the money got there, my mother wrote back to me that it would be like tearing the heart from her bosom to take all the child she had away from her over the sea. And she bid me write to John not to come. 'I'll never, never see him again,' she said, 'if he goes widout us; and, if we must die, let us die together.' But, O me, I was the selfish girl, I was the cruel child! I wrote all about how happy I was, and, if he'd only get consent to come, we would soon send for them, and then we'd make them forget, in their old age, that they ever heard o' throuble. So, after he got that letter, he would hear to them no longer, but took my money and come off. He landed here to-day's a week, and my kind misthress gave me the day, and we went to some people that lived convenient to me at home, to carry the letters John brought. When we got up to go, John, who had complained all day of his head, could n't walk a foot, he was that dizzy. But, says he, dear lad, 'Sure its little as ails *me*, forbye many as came in the ship, and seven dacent boys were thrown into the sea before they got sight o' their friends.' He looked so ill, the good folk said they'd keep him all night. When I got leave to go to him next day, he was so far in sickness that he could n't spake, hardly. The people said he had the ship-fever; so I got a certificate from a doctor near by, and hired a carriage. With the help of the man o' the house, I got him to the hospital. I helped the poor lad into a real clane cool bed, and the nurse

seemed to pity me. He said I'd be let in to see John when I came again, if I asked for himself. Then I bathed his head, poor boy! and kissed him, and wint away. In two days I wint again to his ward; and when I wint up to his bed the breathing was like a strong man, so great hopes were in my heart. I turned down the quilt; but, O, dear heart! an old man was sleeping there! Then such a screech as came from me brought the kind nurse, and he took me to some women up stairs, who put me in a bed, and no more did I know till next day, when the good hospital doctor sint me home in his own chaise. My brother died the day I left him; but where he was buried no one could tell me; and thin my heart was broke, and I can't eat, and I can't sleep! Sure my mother's heart tould her she'd never see John any more! O, they'll niver comb gray hair, poor bodies! O, poor John! O, me!"

"Repose to his soul!" ejaculated Sister Agatha. "Was he a true Catholic?"

"O, dear lady! it's that's breaking my heart! I only saw him a few hours, and I did n't ask him was he faithful to his prayers on the sea. Now, I'm as throubled about his soul as about my poor father and mother at home!"

"And what brought you here, my child?" blandly asked the lady.

"To see if the holy ladies would pray for the repose of his soul!" said Mary.

"Could you come here to vespers for a few nights?" asked the lady.

"No, lady; it's just as I'd be putting the little ones to bed. And I've been out so much, I would n't like to ask my misthress; but I'll pay for the candles, and anything else you like; and I'll say prayers all the time, in my room, after eight o'clock."

"Does your mistress know about your trouble?" Sister Agatha asked.

"'Deed she does, and treats me like a mother! Sure she got out of her bed and came to me in the dead o' the night, when she heard me crying about John, and thried to comfort me! O, but she's the loving heart! God bless her, and all as belongs to her!"

"Did she know you came here?" asked the nun, looking into the girl's eyes, as if to read her secret heart.

"She did," said Mary. "I got leave to be out two hours. Herself staid up stairs, from company, with the children."

"What did she say when you asked to come here?"

Mary blushed, and looked confused; but, being pressed for an answer, replied: "She said I'd better not come, lady; that there was One who could give thrue consolation in time of throuble; and —"

"And what?" asked the lady.

"That He who raised one Mary's brother would pity me and help me too, without —"

"Without what?" And the mild gray eyes became piercing.

"Without money and without price!" came as if forced from Mary's lips.

"Did she ask you," inquired the nun, going close to Mary, and speaking low, "if Father MacRail required money for saying mass?"

"She did; and I tould her they did at home, but I did n't know how it was in Ameriky."

"Do you go ever to their meeting, Mary?"

The girl looked embarrassed, but made no reply.

Sister Agatha could not ask the questions she wished to ask before Isabel, and yet she felt it would not do to request her to retire; so she said, "Perhaps you came for some spiritual advice, and would rather see me quite alone?"

"No, lady; I only want prayers for John's soul and some peace for my own mind; for I'm throubled lest God tuk him to punish me for bringing him away from his poor ould father and mother!"

"Perhaps," said the nun, in so low a tone as scarce to be audible, "it was to punish you for sins against the church that he was taken. I'm afraid you have not been true to your faith!"

Mary hung her head, but made no reply.

"Can you read, my child?" asked the nun.

"'Deed I can; and write and cipher, too!" replied Mary, raising her head with an air of conscious superiority over many of her countrywomen.

"Mrs. Latour calls you, my daughter," said Sister Agatha to Isabel; "and I should like to see this poor troubled child alone for a few moments."

Isabel had withstood hints and glances, but she could remain in the hall no longer without positive rudeness. As she closed the parlor-door, she heard the voice of the nun in a whisper, which is far more distinctly heard than low talking, "I wish you to tell me, Mary, if you read the books and newspapers you see in that house?" Mary replied that she did, sometimes. The nun then asked her if she had ever been forced to go to church with her mistress. Mary replied that she had been, once or twice, but not by force. "It was my own blame, indeed, ma'am."

By this time they had reached the door; and, as it was opened by the nun, who was still talking, the sound came directly to the open window at which Isabel was sitting: "Your mistress is trying to ruin your soul, as she has done her own. I know she forced you to go to her meeting, or lose your place,—the persecutor! What did she say to you then?" said Sister Agatha.

"She said, ma'am, that she 'd force nobody's conscience to go in to prayers, or yet to go to her church. But O, lady! she was that glad to see me there, that she looked younger when I came home."

"I can talk no longer with you, Mary," said the nun, "but I will think whether we had better have prayers in the chapel for your brother's soul or not. Come at day-break, and I will see you again and talk with you. You may go, child!"

"O, holy lady!" replied the poor girl, in a tremulous voice, "I dread the night coming on! I have such fearful dreams of John! 'Deed I can't be faith-

ful to my misthress, nor do my duty to anybody, till I get peace to my mind!"

"Then, if you cannot be faithful, I advise you to leave your place," said Sister Agatha, carelessly. "How much do you get a month, Mary?"

"Six dollars; but I can't leave them, ma'am, for I owe them nearly all the money for John's passage. I have paid the two pounds I sent for my father at the same time."

"But if your health has failed you you *cannot* repay them. No person can do more than he *can.* A change of place would be the best thing for you. I'll get you a place, Mary."

"Sure, lady, I'd as soon go through with the parting I had with my mother again. And what reason could I give for leaving a place where never a child spoke a hard word to me in sixteen months?"

"Your health, child, is reason enough; tell them your health's bad," said Sister Agatha.

"But, holy lady, if you please, my health is good, and I'm as strong as ever!" said Mary.

"I can waste no more time with you," tartly replied the lady; "but you may come at day-break." Then a low word was lost upon Isabel's ear; but, as poor Mary descended the steps, she saw the girl snap the steel clasp of her little black velvet purse. Yes, from her deep poverty, and with the sacrifice of bleeding love for her parents who were in want of it, Mary had put a dollar into the soft, white hand of Sister Agatha; and then she left, and bore back the

same weight of sorrow on her heart. With the burden still there, she must go through her daily duties. She must smile at and caress the baby, and patiently bear the trials which both mother and nurse must endure with older children. Poor Mary! there was One heart full of pity near her; One eye which had shed tears of sympathy with a bereaved Mary over a brother dead. But she knew it not; and it were then in vain to tell her that He would send the Comforter, for she would not dare believe the promise repeated by lips which the holy wafer had never touched.

Isabel, as her quick ear caught the last words of Sister Agatha, felt that the interview had been unsatisfactory to both. She had taken a great dislike to the two nuns who taught the charity-school; but on the elder one she had looked with a different feeling. She thought that she might have become a nun from real principle, misguided by early education; and, won by her unceasing attention and sprightly conversation, she had almost begun to love her. But this scene had drawn aside the veil from her character, and the last lesson in deception, given in the name of religion to this young stranger, made a deep impression on the mind of Isabel.

At dinner the elder nun interested the other ladies with the stories of some of her visitors, and mentioned, with many comments and explanations, Mary's case, as if she had forgotten that Isabel was present at part of the interview. She concluded her remarks by saying, "Poor child! she ought not to have

her rest disturbed by children; and, were not our house under such a pressure just now, I would take her in myself,—I would shelter this homeless stranger."

"Would it be right," asked Isabel, "to take her from a home where she is so kindly treated, and that while she owes a debt of honor to her employer?"

"Her first duty is to regain her health, and she will then be in a fairer way of doing justice to those to whom she is indebted than by toiling on till she dies on their hands!" replied Sister Agatha, looking at Isabel with a look quite unlike her usual sweet expression. Her eyes were opened to see that petting Isabel like a spoiled child would not win her over to their hands, but that hers was one of those minds which, to be led at pleasure, must be blindfolded.

Another morning dawned on Isabel, and the alabaster clock in the parlor struck out long and loud the matin-hour. After half an hour's delay, which Isabel thought quite contrary to the rules of the order, Sister Agatha denounced the faithless Mary, and the party went into the chapel. Isabel had requested to be excused from morning prayers, and gladly was her request complied with; for the Sisters plainly saw that they were on the wrong track for her, and wished to have further conference with Mrs. Latour on the case. Therefore they were careful not to arouse her feelings against themselves, hoping yet to win her.

Isabel sat at the parlor-window, all absorbed in her own thoughts, and trying to decide whether she should yield to Mrs. Latour's second thought, and remain

with Sister Agatha, or proceed to the nunnery, where a positive agreement had been made for her. This latter she thought the right course, and she therefore resolved to go thither.

A slight movement without rattled the chain which confined the charity-box to the iron railing, and, looking round, Isabel saw the poor girl who had so deeply interested her the preceding day dropping her toil-gained offering into the box. Then came a timid ring, and Isabel fearlessly opened the door. Mary smiled, as if she felt a relief when she saw the sweet face, and asked, "Am I too late, lady? One of the children was ill last night, and herself did not go to bed till three o' clock, so I could not leave the baby till she rose up."

"You are too late for the morning prayers, Mary," replied Isabel, "but you can pray for yourself; God will hear *you* as soon as them!"

"But, my poor brother's soul!" exclaimed Mary, clasping her hands, and raising her streaming eyes to heaven. "Sure God would n't hear me if I was so selfish as not to get his soul out of purgatory!"

"My poor girl," said Isabel, "the Bible is the only book which reveals a future state, and that says not a word of purgatory. We shall be punished for our own sins, but not for our friends neglecting us when we are gone. Do you think a just God will send all the souls to hell who have been called into his presence this summer by this fever, simply because they had no friends to pray for them? No, Mary;

He is the God of the stranger. Poor and rich are alike in his sight; and money paid for the mass will never save a soul. Christ alone can do that; you must go to him. The state of your brother's soul is fixed for eternity; all the money in the world would not avail to move God's hand, and you must submit to His will. I beg you will not waste your money, but send it home to your parents, that they may be a comfort to you, and you to them!" Thus the child of many prayers, and taught faithfully in the Scripture, strove to console another with the blessed doctrines which she herself could not fully lay hold upon.

"O, that's sweet talk, lady!" replied the girl, with a look of wonder, "and it seems to lift a load off my heart; but it's the very same words that my mistress says to me, only I was afraid to believe her, because she was a Protestant. But I'm sure she'll go to heaven, dear heart!—wont she? God will forgive her for that!"

"Yes, my poor girl; I do not doubt she will go there. My mother was, O, how like Christ! and she was a true Protestant. She is in heaven, I know; for she was so like heaven before she went!" And the beautiful Isabel bowed her head, and mingled her tears with those of the lowly Irish girl. As there were none to see her weep but a wounded spirit like her own, she did not restrain her tears till her heart, like the cloud after the shower, was lightened of its burden, and the sun shone through again.

"Sure the holy lady may be angered with me, when she comes, for being late?" said Mary, inquiringly.

"No doubt she will be; so you had better go home to your duties, and pray to God for yourself. Here is a five-dollar piece for you. Carry it home to your mistress, and tell her it is so much towards sending for your mother. I know the worth of a mother, Mary, and want all those who have one to enjoy such love while they can. But remember, Mary, if your parents die for want of what you spend for masses, God will require their life at your hands!"

"Sure my heart's broke, and my head's wild, too!" said the poor girl. "God knows, if I knew the true way, I'd be willing to walk in it!" And, with such warm thanks as the Irish alone can bestow, Mary departed.

"Did the bell not ring while we were at our prayers, my daughter?" asked Sister Agatha of Isabel, at the breakfast-table.

"It did," replied Isabel. "The young girl in black, who was here yesterday, came to tell you that sickness in the family prevented her fulfilling her promise to come at daybreak."

"Sickness!" exclaimed the nun. "I have no confidence in that girl. She has either forsaken, or, at least, proved unfaithful to, her religion; and now, in trouble, she is glad to fly back to the only refuge. I shall have nothing to do with her unless she calls to night. She shall be cast off in her hour

of need, as a warning to others. I despise one who proves traitor to the religion of his fathers!"

"Then," said Isabel, smiling at Sister Agatha, "I must be careful not to lose your esteem by becoming a Catholic."

"Ah!" said the pale-faced nun, who seldom spoke, "it is only when those parents have been themselves reared in the true faith that desertion is traitorous."

"Well," replied Isabel, "my mother was a Protestant, and she was a lovely example of the power of her faith."

The nuns exchanged glances. Sister Agatha began to think the nunnery the best place for Isabel, and was glad to yield her up, money and all, to more resolute hands.

After breakfast, Mrs. Latour proposed a walk. Isabel joyfully assented, for she thought she was entirely shut out from the world. As they passed out the door, they encountered the box which Isabel had seen from the window. On the front, and facing the street, was this inscription, in gilt letters: "FOR THE SICK AND DYING, VISITED BY THE SISTERS OF CHARITY." "Ah, my love," asked the simple-minded lady, as she saw Isabel reading it, "is not theirs a holy, self-denying life?"

"Not half so much so as my mother's was!" replied the young girl. "I saw all those poor creatures who called yesterday give money, but I doubt if they

received any. Did you think they were aided with food and clothing?" she asked of Mrs. Latour.

"No; but with spiritual things, my love."

"Then, why this box?" asked Isabel.

"To aid in supporting this house, my love. What could sustain these holy women while giving their time to this work of love, were not some such means resorted to?"

"Just as I thought, Mrs. Latour," replied the shrewd girl to the simple-hearted lady's confession. "I could, however, improve their inscription on the box. I would say, 'FOR THE SISTERS OF CHARITY, VISITED BY THE POOR AND SICK.'"

Mrs. Latour laughed, and said she never saw a Protestant who could see through her religion. Her own soft heart and elastic spirit had not retained the iron impress of her creed. She could love and honor friends and neighbors who were not of her own faith.

They had now reached a public street, and Mrs. Latour said, in a subdued tone, "Dear Isabel, you know I have always loved you, for the sake of La petite Angele. I used to think I would give you the rich cross and rosary her father bought for her in Paris, when you were old enough to take good care of them; but my aunt requested me to bestow them on the Sisters, as they were blessed by a French bishop,—so I could not refuse. I always intended to make you a present for the love you bore to Marie Angele. Come into this store, and select a jewelled cross to wear on your chain. They are very fashionable just now."

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Latour," said Isabel; "I will gladly accept and treasure up some little gift in remembrance of the only little companion I ever had, save my sister. But I could not wear a cross as an ornament!"

"Why not, my love? Crosses are all the fashion. Even Jewish ladies wore them at Mrs. Hart's ball, and a great many Protestants."

"The more shame to them!" said Isabel, as they walked past the store slowly. "The Catholics have a superstitious veneration for the cross, and many of them believe it will charm away all that is evil. But, how Protestants can wear this emblem of the Saviour's cruel death into scenes of vain amusement, where one thought of Him whose memory makes it precious would be unwelcome, I cannot conceive. It has always seemed to me not only in bad taste, but almost sacrilege, to wear a cross for fashion's sake. Pardon me, dear Mrs. Latour; but you know I always speak my mind."

Mrs. Latour looked sad and drew a sigh. "But," she said, "you will go into the next store with me, and accept something we can agree upon?"

"Indeed I will, and feel very grateful for your kindness," said Isabel, who feared she had wounded her friend's feelings. They entered the store, and the well-meaning lady, after tempting Isabel in vain with crosses and rosaries, purchased a rich brooch for her, and a ring, to be sent to her little favorite, Virginia.

They extended their walk some distance; and, as the mention of no disputed topic marred the pleasure, it was pleasant and invigorating to both. They returned to the house of the Sisters of Charity in time for dinner.

CHAPTER V.

> "She bore herself
> So gently, that the lily on its stalk
> Bends not so easily its dewy head."

"WHICH hand will you have?" exclaimed Sam, as he entered his mother's room, where the girls were seated ready for their lessons. "Right or left, Virginia?—right or left, Anna?"

"Have you been to the post-office?" asked Jane, in a trembling voice.

"I have," replied Sam.

"Have you any letters for *me?*"

"No letters!"

"Have you *a letter*, then, Sam? Why will you be such a tease? Let me have it,—please, brother, do." And she put her hand into his pocket. But Sam was too wise for her,—it was not there.

"I've got something for everybody but myself."

"O, dear Sam, don't be so silly!" said Jane, trying to wash her slate; "it's almost time to begin our lessons, and we shall not like to hinder Ma, by reading letters, when she is ready for us."

"No," said Sam "that would be quite out of the

way for a good conscientious girl, like you; so wait till your lessons are over for your letter with a foreign stamp, if I have such a one for you."

"I believe you are making a fool of me,— I don't think the Cambria is in, at all!"

"Well," said Sam, "if she is not, then there is no letter."

"Have you any for *me*, coz?" asked Virginia. "I entreat you to tell me, for I have not Jane's saint-like patience."

He drew from his bosom a letter, and read, "Miss Virginia McIver, care of Rev. Mr. Vail, Brookside, Mass."

"O, my darling Isabel!" cried Virginia, running into her own room to read it.

"The Cambria *has* arrived, and here is a letter for *you*, Jane! I brought one, too, for the old doctor. Did n't he hop, when he saw me coming into the front yard, though! He forgot the gout and the crutches. The old lady took off her glasses, to be able to cry without difficulty while he was reading it to her. Don't they love Dick, though?"

Poor Jane held her letter with a trembling hand while Sam was pouring forth his nonsense. She had not courage to run and hide, as did Virginia with her treasure. Sam saw her embarrassment, and his love of sport gave way to the truly noble spirit which prompted him to leave the room.

When Mrs. Vail took her seat to hear the morning lessons, little Charlie, the only little child in the

house, came in with a slip of paper on which was written, "Will dear mamma please excuse me from her room this morning?—Jane."

"Tell her, yes, Charlie; and hasten back," said the mother.

Virginia looked bright and happy, but was impatient to tell all her sister wrote. Her aunt said it would delay the lessons, and so the reading of her letter was reserved till dinner-time. "Letters from those we love are little ministering angels, are they not?" Mrs. Vail asked, smiling, as she looked into Virginia's beaming face.

Dinner, which at the parsonage was always more like a joyous meeting than like the mere "feeding" which takes place in many families, at last came. Mamma in her neat morning-dress and cap; papa with study-gown, and hair thrown back, which showed where his fingers had found employment while his brain was busy; cheerful, joyous, bustling Anna, tying on Charlie's bib and cutting his meat; prince-like Sam, carving for his weary father, and stealing glances at the little southern beauty seated opposite to him;—all these at a neatly-spread table in the cheerful dining-room,—was it not a pretty picture? There was no haste, as if they were eating for a wager, or expecting every moment the exorbitant call of a factory-bell; for everything here was done in its proper time, and the dinner-hour was as a resting-place between morning and afternoon duties.

"Nora, will you take this cup of tea and piece of toast up to Miss Jane?" said Mrs. Vail.

"I thought something was wrong at table to-day," said Virginia. "Jane is not here,— is she sick?"

"She does not feel just right, my love, and I wished her to lie down," said Mrs. Vail.

Sam and Virginia saw that the older members of the family were in possession of a secret; but they said nothing.

"Now, Virginia, let's hear about Isa," said her aunt, trying to look cheerful. "What does she say?"

"Shall I read, or tell you, auntie?"

"Tell, by all means; and then you can kill two birds with one stone, as you can eat between your words," said Sam.

"Well, her letter has made me really happy, for I had almost feared to open it. She is at the house of the Sisters of Charity, with our kind old neighbor, Mrs. Latour. She says that after she leaves there and goes to the convent she may never have a chance to write *all* she wishes, as no letter goes out or comes in without the Superior's inspection. She says she is amused and astonished, rather than cast down; and I'm glad of that, for Isa is such an odd child, and speaks out her mind so plain, that I feared she would make the nuns hate her, so that they would handcuff and muzzle her before they had found how worthy she was of their love. She says both eyes and ears are open, and she shall have much to reveal, although

for ten days they have been much more reserved and guarded before her than at first. She says that after hearing a true-hearted Irish girl refuse to implicate her Protestant mistress in the sin she committed in attending church with her little ones, she longed to tell everybody to deal tenderly and pitifully with these faithful but misguided ones. Ah! she says, little do Protestant families know how their affairs are laid open before these priests and nuns, and how one domestic is encouraged to watch and report any such breach of Catholic duty as attending Protestant church, or family prayers, in her fellow-domestics! If they ascertain that a girl is beloved in a family, they insist on her striking for more wages, that she may thus more abundantly aid the *holy cause*. The most wretched pauper emigrant gives what he perhaps begged for bread from a Protestant, but none receive a copper from *their* funds. And, O, their forms and ceremonies! She says that our own form of worship, discarding every rite and ordinance which is not laid down in God's word, never appeared so beautiful in its simplicity as now. She says, tell dear aunt and uncle that there is little danger of her bowing the knee to Baal, or receiving the mark of the beast in her forehead.

"So thought Gen. Gray," said Mr. Vail. "His daughter's ambition was united with his own, and she thought that by going to the convent to finish her education she was in no danger of becoming a Catholic, and might thereby secure thousands of votes

which would elevate her father, and thus his children, above the people. Our hearts are deceitful; and, even when our motives are pure, we are liable to be led astray through error of judgment. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' We are frail creatures."

"But, what about the daughters of Gen. Gray?" asked Virginia. "My aunt met them last summer at the Springs. She admired them very much; and they, as well as Mrs. Latour, were very anxious to have us both go to the convent. Aunt said the nuns had made them the most perfect ladies she ever met."

"They are very intelligent and refined," said Mr. Vail; "but no thanks to the convent for that. They were both past twenty when they went there, and had been educated at one of our first schools. They, no doubt, spent most of their time in the nunnery at ornamental branches, and in general reading. Their polished manners are attributable rather to the society in which they have mingled from childhood. Their father, having some prospect of election to an office of state, and knowing the power of the Catholic vote, sent them to the convent. But the wise man was taken in his own craftiness. This was done too late to secure Catholic votes, as it did not become generally known till after the voters had received their orders for the polls.. Years have passed since then, and he has again the prospect of an election. His eldest daughter still attends the mass, and now he thinks he has clear ground on both sides of the fence."

CHAPTER VI.

From yon blue heavens above us bent,
The gardener Adam and his wife
Smile at the claims of long descent.
Howe'er it be, it seems to me
'T is only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.

TENNYSON.

"COME, Sam!" called Mrs. Vail to her son, who, with Virginia, was feeding his young rabbits, "I want you to go down to Aunty Fosdick's, and see if she has any fresh eggs to spare. Could you take another basket, and get some of her golden pippins?"

"Aunt, let me go, and carry one basket; — may I?" asked Virginia.

"It is a mile from here, my dear; can you walk so far?"

"O, yes!" said Virginia. "Pa used to take long, long walks with us. We used to go up on the mountains after minerals and moss; we have thick shoes, on purpose, and I brought mine with me."

After a smile of consent from Mrs. Vail, she began to equip herself, and they soon set off.

"Sam," said Virginia, after they had left the house,

"what has happened? That letter you gave dear Jane, this morning, certainly has troubled her. Uncle and aunt have looked distressed all day."

"I don't know what it is," said Sam. "You know that Jane corresponds with Dick Campbell, the doctor's son. At school they used to be great friends, and, after they grew up, he was always here; that is, after he got so big that Ma was ashamed to send him home. He 's been away now two years, *walking the hospitals*, as they call it, in France and Germany. He 's quite a man of the world; rather too much so for Pa and Ma. His family belong to the other church, and are not near so strict in religious things as our people. He said once that the only thing Jane lacked to make her perfect was more vivacity; but, since he went away, she has far less. You know she has joined the church; and perhaps his letter was so full of nonsense that it made her unhappy; or, she may think he will not like the change in her."

"Is he handsome, Sam?" asked Virginia.

"The ladies all think so," said the boy; "but he looks, to me, as if he had been taking too many of his own pills!"

"Is he tall, Sam?—when is he coming home?"

"He is tall, and is to return in a few months. You know doctors often have strange views of religion, and I believe there's something wrong in Dick's theology; but I don't remember what. Maybe that's what troubles Jane. She wants every one to be as

good as herself. Is n't she a saint, Virginia? — always so sweet!"

"Yes, she is, Sam," said the young girl; "and when she smiles she looks just like Ma. You don't remember my mother, do you, Sam?"

"No, I was so young when she was here; but it seems as if I did, I've heard so much about her. Does Ma look like her?"

"Yes, and seems very much like her, only not so sad."

"What made her look sad?" asked the boy.

"I don't know, unless it was because none of her friends at home — Pa and Aunt Jessie — were Christians."

"Are you and Isabel Christians?" asked Sam.

This was a hard question. "I don't know," replied Virginia. "It is said, 'He that is not with me is against me;' and I'm sure I'm not against Christ. I think I love him. But, I'm afraid, Sam, that although my heart is not near so bad as many people's, I'm not such a Christian as my mother was, and yours, and old Mrs. Rose, and —"

"And Jane," said Sam.

"Yes," said Virginia, who now remembered and understood why Mrs. Vail charged Jane in particular to pray for Isabel.

"I *know* I'm not a Christian," said Sam, "because I love the world so well. I can't deceive myself. I do not enjoy the society of good people so well as that of the gay and lively. I feel the time tedious even

in church, unless Pa preaches about some narrative or biography. But I hope some time I shall have done sowing my wild oats. Dear mother! she could hardly die happy unless her children were all converted. If my mother were in heaven, as yours is, Virginia, I'm sure I'd try hard to go there too!"

"There's more reason why you should strive now, for you have her to help you, Sam. If my dear Ma were only alive to guide me, I think I should by this time have been more like her."

And thus the children talked in their few sober moments,—the self-righteous girl and the earth-loving boy,—until, turning down a little by-road which led along beside a stream, they saw in the distance an old brown cottage, over which two huge elms clasped their branches, as if to bid defiance to rain or wind, and to shield their humble charge beneath from harm and danger.

"That's the place!" said Sam, pointing to it; "they're at home!"

"How do you know that?" asked his cousin.

"Do you see the little window opening on the porch?"

"Yes."

"Well, do you see that the little white curtain is drawn down?"

"Yes."

"Well, when they go away from home they draw the curtain close, and this is an infallible sign."

"Who are these poor people?" asked Virginia.

"You are much mistaken, if you think they are poor. They own this farm you see stretching all around, two cows and a horse; but, *such a horse!* Some time you shall have a ride behind him; it would be hardly safe or comfortable to mount his back, his gait is so very peculiar.—O no, I forgot—he's dead! I'll tell you how Hippyty Hop departed this life. It was quite an event in these parts. One Sabbath morning, while the good old man, his master, was harnessing him to go to church, he expired in his hands. Verdict:—Decay of nature."

"What makes them live in such an old house, if they are not poor?"

"Because they love it; they are very proud of its age, and of the ancient elms that stretch their branches over it. The way they came to have such a queer-shaped house, with only one door, and that leading into the kitchen, was this. It was built by his own hands before he was married, when just starting in the world. He was not very well off, but resolved to pay for every board and nail before he used them. He meant what you see for the kitchen part, intending, as he was able, to build a front. But I suppose that during the honey-moon the idea of a larger house only suggested the separation of loving hearts. Very likely he asked her, as did somebody or other in Lalla Rookh *his* love,—'Would that be world enough for thee?' She probably said it would; and there, Virginia, have they lived together for sixty years, and sent out into the world some dozen decent, hard-working,

true-hearted men and women, to honor and bless their old age."

The two cousins had wandered along the stream till they reached the moss-grown stone wall of Mr. Fosdick's garden, when, lifting a wooden latch, they entered and walked towards the house. After standing a moment to admire the noble elms planted by hands long since crumbled to dust, they knocked at the door, and opened it at the bidding of a cheerful "Come in." Virginia was about drawing back from what she thought a private scene; but the old lady called to her, "Come in, child, and take a cheer; he 's a combing my hair for me. Since I 've got so old it makes my arms ache to do it, and my children 's all gone now."

Virginia advanced, and took the old lady's proffered hand. *He*, as Mrs. Fosdick always called her kind old husband, laid the comb down on her shoulder while he shook hands with the young visitors, and then resumed his work of love. The old lady tied on her cap, and then said, "I'm ashamed to have you see *him* looking so. He 's been a' hoeing potatoes all morning just as he is. When he was done I told him to dress up; but I reckon he was too tired,—old folks get tired soon. Come, father, suppose you go and rig up a little, now."

"O! where 's the use," said the old man, archly, "now they 've seen me? Wish I had took your advice afore they come; but, if I should go to the bother of doing it now, they would n't forget how I

looked when they come. My woman 's getting proud," he said, with a smile. "She used to let me go to the post-office, when we was young, just as I came from the field. Is this here the young lady from the southern country, your mother told about, Sam?"

"Yes, sir," said Sam, "it 's my cousin, Virginia McIver."

"I seed your mother once," said the old man. "Did n't she take tea here, ma'am, a dozen years ago or so, with Miss Vail?"

"Yes," said the old lady, "but it 's more than that; 't was afore this child was born."

"Got a good many black folks, down your way, han't you?" asked Mr. Fosdick.

"A great many," replied Virginia.

"You beat 'em a good deal, don't you?" he asked.

"*I* don't," said Virginia, smiling.

"Your father, I mean."

"No, indeed," said Virginia. "I never saw him whip one."

"You keep a man a purpose to beat yourn, I suppose. I 've hearn tell that the rich ones did."

"Ours are never whipped," said Virginia; "they are too good to need it. We have but few. One man has gone abroad to take care of Pa, and three are at home taking care of the house."

"Things look pretty mis'able, down your way, don't they?" asked Mr. Fosdick.

"In what respect, sir?"

"Han't the land all run out?"

"Run out! — what 's that?" said Virginia.

Sam threw in a few words by way of explanation, when the young girl replied, "I never heard anything about it."

"Why, that 's queer! I heard you could buy a splendid farm, near a market, for five or six dollars an acre, and that a Yankee could renew it with manure so as to double its value in one year. Some 's gone there a'ready."

"Is n't that in *Virginia*, Mr. Fosdick?" asked Sam. "My uncle lives further south."

"Well, maybe so,— I don't know much about the country out there; 'tis where the slaves is, though. I know more about the western country; our children 's all gone there and got homes of their own. That 's a great country!"

"It certainly is," replied Sam, "a paradise for farmers."

"Well, them 's rich folks, off there to the south; got enough of this world's goods, and high blood in 'em, too. But howsever, my boy, I would n't change places with 'em. O no!" he added, with a smile, "I 'm nothing but a plain farmer, children. That 's all that my forefathers was afore me, and all my *pro-ginetors* will be arter me. But we was all *honest* farmers, and *hard-working* ones too. You can't tell what my place was twenty years ago, afore I got so old and the boys went west. I tell you, we kept things straight, and the pastures looked like velvet. I

always striv to do my duty, and I believe I'm as faithful now that I only work *four* hours a day, as when I worked fifteen. God an't a hard master; He don't require no more of his children than He gives 'em strength to do.

'Even down to old age all His people shall prove,
His sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs in His bosom they still shall be borne.'"

The old man rose when he repeated the last two lines, and the children looked at his radiant face in surprise.

"That's true;" he continued, "and I'd rather have a clear conscience than to own the whole arth and everybody on it. That slavery I don't think much on, nohow. It's agin my principles altogether, and—"

"Look here, father," said the old lady, gently laying her hand on his arm, "'t an't nothing this child can help."

"But, ma'am, the time's a coming when she can help it, and maybe then she'll remember what the old man in Brookside said."

"I'm sure I shall never forget it," said Virginia, looking up reverentially to the faded face of Father Fosdick.

There was a little break in the conversation, when Mr. Fosdick inquired of Virginia, "Is your father an Irishman?"

"My father an Irishman! No, indeed, sir," answered the girl.

"Why, he 's a Catholic, an't he?"

"No, sir, he is not; he is far from it."

"Did n't we hear that he was goin to shut up one of his gals in a convent, ma'am?"

"Yes," said the old lady. "Sally Jones said she heard so."

Sam and Virginia attempted an explanation, and apologized for Isabel's strange situation as best they could; but they did not satisfy themselves, neither could the simple-minded old couple comprehend them. They seemed to think that convent, Catholic, and Irish, were synonymous words, and Mr. Fosdick wound up by asking how long since her father *came over*.

It was now four o'clock, and the old lady began bustling round to get tea; but they assured her they would be expected home, and must go. The eggs were put in the basket, and, as the pippins were not ripe enough to eat, Mrs. Fosdick loaded Virginia's basket with all sorts of good things for "the folks to hum." But, to Virginia's eyes, the style in which they were prepared was truly primitive.

When they reached the little brook again, Sam selected two clean stones for seats, and they began to examine the contents of the basket. "Let 's have a picnic!" he said. "Here 's a pie and a baked chicken, and lots of doughnuts; but, O! how funny they all look,—the very rooster looks old-fashioned; quite unlike the modern worthies which were baked in Ma's fiery furnace a few days after you came."

And then, in their innocent glee, they spread a newspaper from Sam's pocket on the ground, and partook of Mrs. Fosdick's bounty.

"You must not think," said Sam, "that these are the *élite* of Brookside, cousin. We have many wealthy and educated families; there are several young girls of your age, who will call on you after you have had time to shake the dust off your travelling dress. But, if you are going to *live* at the parsonage, you must make yourself agreeable to all sorts of people."

"Why, Sam, though I have not seen any of the *élite* of whom you speak," said Virginia, "do you know I 'm perfectly delighted with those I have seen. Such people as at home we should call vulgar, among you are truly interesting for their originality. The conversation of this Mr. and Mrs. Fosdick, and of Mrs. Rose, is a perfect feast for me; for I never met with the like before,—such beautiful simple affection for each other, and love to God."

"Jane thinks such people enjoy far more, and suffer far less, than those in a higher class. Is she right?" asked Sam.

"She *may be*," answered Virginia; "but let me suffer more, and enjoy less, rather than fall to their level."

"Ah! the falling! that would change the matter altogether. They were never up where we are," said Sam, smiling, "or the remembrance of it would make

their present life wretched. How many books do you think Father Fosdick has?"

"Perhaps not twenty," replied Virginia.

"He has a Bible (and uses it too), The Village Hymns, Bunyan's Pilgrim, and copies of the Almanac back from the flood, all hung by a twine string on a nail in the corner."

"Sam, you ought to show him uncle's library."

"He 's seen it; he said he told a book-agent that he need n't call to the 'parsonage-house,' for the minister had more books now than he could ever live to read through. I suppose he thought that the Greek and Hebrew Lexicons were to be read, as we read 'Uncle Tom,' without taking breath."

"Well, the truth is, from the little I 've seen here, I 'm enraptured with the Yankees; the height of my ambition is to become a genuine Yankee girl. Ma used to tell me about the young ladies in her father's congregation who stood at the wash-tub, or made butter, or scrubbed floors, all the morning, and played the piano, and read and studied, afternoons."

"Poor things!" exclaimed Sam; "they had no black folks to scrub and wash for them,—to toil by day, and sleep on the floor by night. Why did n't you bring one with you? Was you afraid Pa would help her off to Canada? The underground railroad runs pretty near our house."

"No, indeed," said Virginia; "I did not need one, and we knew that Molly, who has always taken care of us, would not like to leave her children, and also

that it would be a trouble to aunt. Did n't I tell you, Sam, I came with the full intention of becoming a Yankee girl? You 'll see me blacking these walking-shoes, some day," said Virginia, smiling, and showing her dusty shoes. "But what are we thinking about? See, the sun has set! I am afraid poor Nora has had to keep the table waiting for us. Let's hasten home."

CHAPTER VII.

> "Give me but
> Something whereunto I may bind my heart;
> Something to love, to rest upon, to clasp
> Affection's tendrils round!"

Mrs. Latour was gone to her home, and Isabel, the lonely-hearted, was now an inmate of the convent. There was here no such amusement as she had at the house of the Sisters of the Heart of Mercy, for here she saw no company. The pupils were under the care of nuns ever watchful over their words, looks, and actions. One nun slept in each room, if indeed the nuns ever slept, which the pupils thought very doubtful, for every whisper and every breath was heard.

How the joys of the young are enhanced, and their griefs lessened, by confiding them to others! But this was at first denied the *new scholars*, until their characters had been learned, so that no true Catholic maiden, or one in a transition state, should be endangered in her faith by intercourse with an unbeliever. Great gentleness and tenderness towards Isabel were the result of the insight into her character which the Sisters of Charity had gained; so that, although

alone and cut off from free communion with her friends, she found herself the object of great interest among the teachers and pupils.

The nuns were nearly all interesting in their appearance, and two of them were truly lovely. The older ones superintended the domestic part of the establishment, and the younger ones the education of the scholars. Here the quiet was in unison with Isabel's feelings, and the studies with her taste. At home, her mother had insisted that the hated mathematics, and the other solid branches, should be foremost; but here, French and Spanish, the piano and the pencil, light English literature, and the embroidery-frame, divided the time. The grounds attached to the convent were beautifully laid out, and many were the delightful walks Isabel enjoyed with Sister Leonore, a young lady whom family afflictions had induced to seek shelter in what she called "This Holy House." She was now made secure,—she had taken the white veil; and, having no home to sigh for, and no property to lose, she had little inducement to return to the world. So she was charged with the care of Isabel. Soon the fear of her as a nun wore away, and Leonore and Isabel became loving friends.

"I wish, my dear child, to grant you every privilege in my power," said Leonore; "but I *must be faithful* to my trust, and I do not think it would be the will of the Holy Mother that you should read a Protestant version of the Scriptures, although she does not positively forbid it."

"But, Sister Leonore," said Isabel, "it would be oppression to take away my Bible, even though you should substitute a Catholic one."

"It is surely right that you should obey the rules of the establishment, dear Isabel," said the lovely nun, "and also consult the wishes of the dear Mother."

"Would it be right that a Catholic should do so, at a Protestant school?" inquired Isabel.

"That's not a supposable case," replied Leonore; "for so convinced are the Catholics that their faith is the only infallibly true one, and so watchful are they of souls, that they never send their children where they will hear or read what might shake their confidence in our holy religion."

"I know it," said Isabel, "and it is strange that all Protestants are not as careful with their children. My aunt, however, was assured, previous to my coming here, that my religion should not be interfered with."

"Nor shall it be," replied the nun. "You may in your heart believe what you please; but outwardly you must observe the rules of the convent."

"Do you think it would be honest for me to repeat prayers to Mary, as the 'Mother of God,' or to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, or any other saint, asking them to plead with God for me, when in my heart I believe this is all forbidden in the Scriptures, and that 'there is but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus'? I always pass over in silence the prayers which I do not believe to be scriptural. I

regard my mother's religion sacred, and shall never forsake it."

"Say not that, darling Isabel! Surely, if you should see that even a mother was in error, dangerous error, you would not wish, by following her, to lose your soul. You know not the consolation that we find, in time of need, through the blessed Mary's intercession."

"I know what my mother enjoyed through Christ's intercession," said Isabel. "The Bible says that '*He* ever liveth to make intercession,' but it says not a word of Mary's mediation."

"Why do you always quote your mother, my love, in speaking of sacred things? Do you not also have some hopes of your own? In what do you trust?"

"In nothing," answered Isabel. "I have no hope!"

"No hope! and yet declaring against a creed which holds out hope for the vilest?"—and Leonore crossed herself, and called on Mary to aid her erring child.

"No hope is better than a false one, Sister Leonore," said Isabel; "and I fear your hope has no foundation. Why do you hope?"

"Christ has died for us on the blessed cross; I fast oft; *repeat more Ave Marias* than any one in the convent, &c. &c."

"But Leonore," interrupted Isabel, "the Bible says that 'by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified,' and that Christ's is 'the only name whereby we can be saved.'"

"Ah, but our church is infallible, and she says that we can add our own merits to Christ's, and lay up 'a stock of good works on which we may live for eternity.'* I wish that, as far as you can, when in private you would use our beautiful forms of prayer; and, even if you use your own, I think you would find nearer access to God from the chapel. The other ladies, Catholic and Protestant, go twice a-day to the chapel to perform their worship. Go there alone, and stay till you have some hope. Never say, in a Christian land, that you have no hope. Now, you see, my dear, how little influence your religion has had upon you, if for eighteen years you have believed it without any personal gain from it."

"That is because I am not a Christian—have not been converted."

"But why are you not a Christian?" asked Leonore. "I will tell you. You have done nothing, are doing nothing, towards securing heaven. You're waiting in the hope that, by and by, through some one's else work, you may obtain it. O, Isabel! that is an easy belief for the ease-loving. I love your soul, darling, and shall pray for you," continued the affectionate Leonore; "only promise, dear, to go before day into the chapel."

Isabel promised. "Surely," she thought, "the place will not defile my prayers, and I shall not look at the image or pictures of Mary, nor use the name

* Challoner's "Garden of the Soul."

of a saint. Sweet, sad, sincere Leonore! how can I refuse her thrice-broken heart any boon it seeks?"

When Isabel laid her head upon her pillow that night, and repeated what her mother had taught her to lisp in childhood, "Now I lay me down to sleep," &c., she was no more a Catholic than when she sat on her mother's knee; but she did love Leonore more dearly than ever, and was disposed to look more leniently on any error into which she might have been led.

Before the break of day, a warm kiss awoke the gentle Isabel; and, opening her eyes, she saw Sister Leonore in her white night-robes beside her bed. "Your promise, love," she whispered; "I 've been a long hour praying for you, as you slept."

Isabel arose, and, wrapping a mantle around her, left her room and passed through the long dark passages which led to the chapel. This was the first step involving danger. But what harm, she asked herself, could come of her praying in one place rather than in another.

It was plain to her eye, as she entered the chapel, that Leonore had been there. The image of Mary was gone from its place; but there, as she stood to gaze a moment before she knelt, was an exquisite picture of our Redeemer crowned with thorns. The pale rays of the waxen candles within and the first beams of coming day without seemed to vie with each other in casting a dreamy, poetic light over the painting. Isabel forgot the object of her visit, and knelt down, gazing enraptured upon that heavenly face. She gazed

upon the thorns that pressed the temples, till she saw the blood ooze from beneath; she looked into the eyes which wept on earth, and still they seemed to weep,—as if to remind her of her sins, and yet of His mercy; her eye was fixed on those lips which spoke forgiveness to his foes, until they seemed to move, and "Father, forgive them," to fall upon her ear. Her mind ran over the familiar story of the shameful crucifixion in its minutest particulars, and she wept. Yes, Isabel wept bitter tears over the Saviour's sufferings. But they were the tears only of awakened sensibility, and not of a heart broken for sin. Then she passed an hour in ejaculatory prayer to Christ, the suffering Christ, and in floods of sentimental tears. There was a sort of luxury in those tears, and a degree of self-righteous satisfaction mingled with her grief. When she left the cold stone chapel, and crept back chilled to her bed, she felt that she was far nearer heaven for this short pilgrimage, and that she loved more dearly the friend whose delicate affection had prompted her to remove the objectionable image and cross. But she was still resolved never to become a *real* Catholic. She was, however, too honorable not to admit to Leonore how much more nearly she approached the Saviour from the altar than from her own room. She said that she seemed to commune with him face to face, and to feel his presence; but she was not aware that to the beautiful picture she owed the feeling she enjoyed. Had the image of the Virgin been there,

or had there been no picture, she would have experienced no such emotions.

Alas! thus it is that the Mistress of Iniquity "deceives" the nations with her "sorceries." She has something which appeals to every grade of intellectual culture, from the lowest to the highest; to every sentiment, feeling, and passion of our nature. She has images and relics, rosaries, charms and crosses, for the ignorant and superstitious; while the refined and sensitive mind is allured by the magic of the pencil, the charms of music, and a venerable antiquity.

Sister Leonore, sincere in following her fathers in a faith she had never examined, was also sincere in her love for her gentle charge. The course she pursued with her was all marked out by those who better understood the true policy of the church. She in simple faith and blind zeal did their bidding, and rejoiced in the faintest token of the success of her efforts.

Thus had Isabel commenced her new life with far less suffering of mind, though more real danger, than she had anticipated. She had found a heart to love her; and her susceptible nature had all of happiness she asked, till the waves should bring "good tidings from a far country."

CHAPTER VIII.

I am not mad! this hair I tear is mine;
Young Arthur is my son, and he is lost;
I am not mad! I would——I were,
For then 't is like I should forget myself;
If I were mad, I should forget my son.

SHAKSPEARE.

How smoothly and joyfully flowed the time with the happy hearts at Brookside! Three days of each week were devoted to those more solid branches which the young dread, but which older and wiser heads know the value of. These firm foundations were insisted on by Mr. and Mrs. Vail, but every endeavor was put forth to make the work as interesting as possible. Monday was devoted to the review of the lessons of the previous week, as on that day Mr. Vail was at liberty and could join them. Experiments, also, in the sciences, which had been passed over at the daily recitations, were then made. Chemistry, Electricity, and other branches of Natural Philosophy, were thus made a source of great amusement. Questions were asked and answered, subjects illustrated by anecdotes and incidents, and each member of the family was expected to contribute

something of interest from the general reading and observation of the week. Mr. Vail laid himself out to be as agreeable as possible, and, as the afternoon closed with tea on the hill when the weather and season permitted, Monday was looked forward to as a sort of gala-day.

It was on one of these happy days, — the last time for the year, when the oaks were dropping their leaves, and the maples putting on their gorgeous autumn drapery,—that the young people were preparing tea on the favorite hill, when Mrs. McCorkle, who had been for months deprived of the society of her hopeful son, was seen advancing to the spot.

"Good-afternoon, Mrs. McCorkle," said Sam, as he saw her crossing the flower-garden.

"Och, och! Master Sam, it's sorra a good afther-noon I see in these days!—Is his Riverence within?"

"Yes, my good woman," said Anna. "Father and mother will soon be here;— in the mean time, sit down. I have no chair to offer, but you are welcome to as much ground as you please to sit upon."

"I'll luft my best gown," said Mrs. McCorkle; and, suiting the action to the word, she took her seat on the grass.

"It's a favor I'll be asking his riverence your father," she began. This was quite an unnecessary piece of information, as the widow never wanted any-thing but favors of Mr. Vail.

"Well, there he comes, behind you, Mrs. McCor-kle," said Sam.

The old lady rose, and, curtseying to Mr. and Mrs. Vail, began weeping,—the usual preface to her petitions,—and then said, "Och, your riverence, but I'm the lonely mother, and ye's with all your childer like angels aboot yees. O, but you're the happy gentleman and lady that's got the likes of them."

"We ought truly to feel grateful, Mrs. McCorkle," replied Mrs. Vail, "that they are all spared to make us so happy."

"Och, but I'm the miserable woman that deserves all that's befell me, for laving the swatest spot iver God's sun shone upon — thraveling over the sea — and all, for what? Why, sure, to meet the bad luck that I've got in this counthry. Och, but the fool I was to leave my home, full and plenty, and nothing to do, and come here to lose my husband and disgrace Jim, and wash for my own living."

"That's not what you came for, my poor friend," said the minister. "These afflictions might have come upon you in your own land."

"There's one of them never would — that's *poverty*," said the old lady, warmly.

"Why, Mrs. McCorkle," said Sam, "don't you remember that the subscription-paper Pa wrote for you to go round with to get your cow began, 'Whereas the bearer, Mrs. Judith McCorkle, fled from poverty and starvation in her own country,' &c."

"Och, och! now, Master Sam," interrupted Mrs. McCorkle, "sure it's not like you to heap throubles on me, that way. Sure, if I had poverty and starva-

tion at home, is n't that just the very reason why I should n't have them here?"

Mr. Vail smiled at this innocent reasoning, and asked, "What can I do for you now, my friend?"

"Och, my heart is full of poor Jim — full and running over!"

"Well, Mrs. McCorkle!"

"And I thought," continued the widow, "that maybe, as your riverence give one paper about the bit of house I live in, and another about the cow, you 'd give me one about gitting Jim out — a petition, like, to them as has the power."

"What *could* I say?" asked Mr. Vail.

Mrs. McCorkle's conscience was not very tender, nor her words few, and she began dictating a petition for Mr. Vail to write: "Whereas James McCorkle, a dacent lad and good son to his mother —"

"But would that be true, my friend?" asked Mr. Vail.

"And if it was n't, sure, how would they know that?" answered the widow.

"But we must speak the truth at all times," said Mr. Vail. "God knows, if our fellow-men do not."

Mrs. McCorkle saw that she had gone too fast; and, changing her tone, began to cry, for effect; saying, as she wrung her hands, "God keep the childer of the poor! If all I have got in the world would raise twenty dollars, sure I'd soon have him out; but whin a poor innocent lad goes a bit astray, and his mother 's

a widow, he must stay in jail till the hard hearts that took him is revinged on him."

Mr. Vail saw it was in vain to reason with his visitor, and again asked what he could do for her.

"Could n't you tell how long you 've known Jimmy, and that he cut all your last winter's wood?"

"I will tell you what I will do," said Mr. Vail; "I 'll give you a line to your priest, and as Jim is one of his flock, he will see to him."

"O, but how could I, a poor body like me, have the face to throuble the holy Father with my little consarns? 'Dade," said the widow, "I 'd be ashamed to do the likes o' that."

"But his time is no more to him than mine is to me," said Mr. Vail. "My time belongs to my flock; and if your minister should send me a line saying that one of my church-members was in the House of Correction, I should soon see to it, if I had to walk to Boston to do so."

The young people could not help laughing at the idea of a church-member in jail for stealing a cow and resisting an officer; but the inconsistency was not apparent to the darkly-veiled mind of Mrs. McCorkle. "Master Sam," she said, "would carry the paper round to be signed."

"I beg to be excused," said Sam, "for I was not very civilly treated the last time. Several have said they 'd sign a petition to keep Jim in, for now they felt at ease about their poultry; but I don't believe Jim stole all the poultry that was missed last winter;

I 'm sorry for you, but I would n't try to release him; — let the law take its course."

"If anybody 'll give me a paper, I 'll crawl round on my bare knees to every door in the town, will I."

"You could *walk* a great deal faster," said Sam; "but, as a real friend, I advise you not to try. It will teach Jim a good lesson. He may come home a better boy, although I think he is not so bad as some I know of."

Mrs. McCorkle, finding she could do no better, concluded to take a note to Father Phelim O'Keefe in a neighboring town,— a piece of audacity few of her belief are ever guilty of. But Mrs. McCorkle was none of your fearful souls, to be easily abashed in the presence of the great. So, after a good cup of tea and a bountiful repast, of which she had partaken by invitation with the rest, she departed so cheerful and happy that it would have been hard to believe she had ever left a full and plentiful home, or had lost her husband, or was deprived of Jim.

"Well," said Anna, "this is too bad, Pa; the best of the afternoon is gone, and the dews are beginning to fall. We all had some pleasant thing to say, but this foolish old creature has really robbed us."

"*Poor* old creature!" said Jane; "you know she has nowhere else to go when she is in trouble. She has quarrelled, for Jim's sake or her own, with everybody in town but our family,— she has no friends,— we must bear with her."

"That is it, my daughter," said Mr. Vail, looking

tenderly at Jane; "'enduring all things' requires more grace, sometimes, than doing all things; it is often harder to *bear* than to *do*."

"I thought, at first, it was you speaking, Ma;" said Sam; "it sounded just like mother. I think the next generation are to be favored with a second edition of all that's good and lovely in Ma, through you, Jane."

"'Blessed are the peace-makers,'" said Mr. Vail, as if thinking aloud.

"But still, for all your charity towards her, she's a tiresome old creature," said Anna, as she began gathering up the tea-things, "and when I keep house she shan't come to see me; she shan't even do my washing."

"Well, she may come to see me," said Jane, with a pleasant smile.

"I don't believe she will, very often," said Sam. "Dick is not overstocked with patience and charity more than myself, and he would soon order her off. You won't be able to have so many of your old goodies in your own house as you do now. When Ma had the widows' party, Dick said it gave him the horrors to see so many hobbling, worn-out, poverty-stricken folks together,—a sad picture of what we are to become."

"O, brother dear!" said Jane, with an imploring look. Mrs. Vail saw that her daughter was pained, and, going to her, spoke softly. "They had better know it *now*, mamma," said Jane; "'t will save me a thousand pangs."

"Now let us go in," said Mr. Vail; "it is damp, and we can as well finish our conversation in the parlor."

When the happy family party were seated, Jane being absent, the mother said, "I have something to say to the younger ones, particularly to you, dear Virginia, and to Sam. The remark you made, my son, about Richard, has deeply pained your sister. You 're not to blame, as you did not intentionally wound her feelings. Your cousin Jane, dear Virginia, was at far too early an age engaged to this young man. He is fine company, very interesting in manners and appearance, and at heart honorable and upright. But he has not been educated to care for holy things and seems rather inclined to ridicule them. This connection was not at all pleasing to either Mr. Vail or myself, at the time of his leaving his native land. Jane was too much like himself, and, she being warmly attached to him, we gave a sad consent, not, however, without many bitter fears for the happiness of our darling child. She is all that is lovely, and very sensitive, and I well knew that she would be deeply pained to hear holy things reviled. Since the great change has taken place which separates her from all the rest of you, her mind has been much troubled by this union. She wrote frankly to Richard of the change, and of the new life she should lead for the future, with God's help. She was engaged to him,—therefore she must keep her word; but she said *he* was at liberty to break the bond. The letter Sam brought a

short time ago, and the effect of which you must have seen, was an answer to hers."

"He did not wish to give Jane up because she was better than she used to be?" asked Sam.

"He said nothing of that," replied the mother, "but his letter was written in a tone of disappointment and vexation, no doubt to prepare her for one soon to follow which will sever them. This trial, however, gives her an opportunity to suffer for Christ's sake early in her Christian course, and thus to mature her religious character; and we are much gratified to see her bearing the 'peaceable fruits' of affliction,—no murmuring, no giving up to melancholy. You all know that, aside from her affection for Richard, she is yielding a great deal of what the world calls happiness; for the doctor is wealthy, and Richard is his only child. But she told me that one hour's peace of mind, such as she has had since drinking the bitter cup, had been more than a recompense for all her suffering. Henceforth never speak his name, Sam. In a few months he will be at home, and then will be the time to test her resolution. My own opinion is, that severing these ties will be more agreeable to Richard than union with a Christian. The world with its allurements is his delight, and dear Jane's face is now set another way. Two cannot well walk together except they be agreed."

Sam's noble heart was grieved when he heard how his jesting had wounded the feelings of his darling sister. "Mother, why did you not tell us before?

Then you might have spared her this. No one in this world is good enough for Jane. We will keep her always at home and let Anna go," he added, smiling.

"No sir, Ma can't spare her housekeeper yet," said Anna. "What a blessing that there is still room enough at home for us all! He'll be a rare man who can present inducements enough to tempt *me* away from such a home. I love you all more and more, and," she continued, smiling, "I think, with all the minister's trials and toils and all his wife's *bothers*, they are about the happiest people in Brookside."

"So I think, sister," said Sam; "but it has seemed to me, in looking at Pa and Ma, and Jane and Charlie, as if you and I were interlopers here, and that if society should be all shaken up and things get righted, we might come down somewhere else."

Mr. Vail smiled, and asked, "Where would you probably find yourself, Sam?"

"I've hardly thought, sir," answered the boy; "but we should find Anna on a throne,—she was meant for a queen."

"A republican youth talking so!" cried Anna; "don't crave royal honors for me. I'm very ambitious; but my highest hopes are gratified when I can have you all around me and relieve dear father and mother. But I must find my little Jane," said the beautiful girl, rising to leave the room, while she added, "When society gets right side up, what will Jennie be, Sam?"

"A saint, of course," said the boy.

"And Virginia?"

"An angel without wings;—but why did you force such a compliment from me?" he asked, blushing.

"A queen—a saint—an angel!" exclaimed Anna, holding the door in her hand. "Pa, where would the reformers place my bold brother?"

"He might," said Mr. Vail, smiling, "be a literary, high-minded horse-jockey, or a sailor, perhaps, for he is fond of books, of horses, and adventure. I trust he would not be a prodigal son.—But we've heard no more of the sea, lately. How is this, my son?"

"Changed my mind, sir,—could n't think of leaving my mother."

"Sam," asked his father, "what will Mamma and I be, after the upturning of society which the lecturer described the other evening?"

"Just what you now are, sir,—a pastor, and his wife a ministering angel."

"Well, mother," asked Mr. Vail, "if we are not all made vain after this conversation, I shall be glad."

Anna soon returned with Jane, each bearing a basket of fruit, the latter wearing her usual placid face. Virginia looked with admiration on her beautiful cousin, resolving to take her as a model in forming her own character for life. "Just such a character," she thought, "as would please my mother."

CHAPTER IX.

Death lies on her, like an untimely frost
Upon the sweetest flower of all the field.

SHAKSPEARE.

MONTHS had passed away with Isabel since she entered the convent. The autumn frosts had given brilliant hues to the numerous maple-trees around the place, far more gaudy than they wore in the days of their freshness when warm winds fanned and cool showers watered them. But their very beauty was prophetic of decay and death. Fit emblems were these departing glories of her, who, in her youth and beauty and goodness, was within a sombre room of tho convent, fading from earth. Sweet Leonore, the true-hearted friend, the faithful teacher, was near her journey's end, and, like one weary of a wretched and toilsome day, she sighed for rest. Having none else there to love, Isabel had poured out her affection upon the young nun, and the thought of losing her was deeply painful.

"How shall I live when you are gone, Sister Leonore?" she asked, one night, while she aided the poor girl through a long passage leading from the

altar, where in her weakness she had spent a midnight hour.

"How shall I live without you? Every one here but you is cold and selfish; the scholars are giddy and trifling. You, dear Leonore, should never have come here at all. You were too frail for this cruel life. If I had but come a few months sooner, you should have gone home with me to father and Virginia. O, how happy we should have been! But it seems as if all I ever love are torn from me."

"O, talk not thus, my dear Isabel!" said Leonore. "You know not yet the meaning of *sorrow*. When, like you, I lost a gentle mother, my heart was full to bursting. Still, I was the idol of a fond father. When, however, he lost his wealth by villany, a blighting worse than death fell upon him, and till this day he remains in a lunatic asylum. Then how I longed for death!—but still I lived on. I went out a young wanderer, a worse than orphan, to seek my bread by teaching music, and a bright star guided me to a happy home. I was taken into the very heart of the family as their own; but, alas! I had then to learn what sorrow was."

"What could have induced you to seek an abode in this doleful house?" asked Isabel. "I have often wished to know, but dared not be so rude as to ask you."

"The breath of slander drove me here; or, rather, the saints suffered me to be accused of evil of which I was innocent, that I might be driven into this heavenly

rest. The blessed Virgin, who has a fellow feeling for all falsely-accused women, watched over me and guided me hither."

"How did you first think of becoming a nun?"

"I went with a broken heart to a confessor, and unburdened before him, not only my neglect of duty, but my sorrows. He sent me here, as the Mother was at that time striving to obtain a teacher of music and of modern languages. I came, and she, like a real mother, opened these doors to me. When the world cast me out, she took me in.

"I confess to you, what I would confess to no other, that my life has been sad and lonely here after having lived in the midst of gay society. But I have never had one temptation to leave this place. Here I have given myself away as the 'bride of heaven,' and great rapture have I enjoyed in laying up everlasting treasure."

"How have you done this, dear Leonore?" asked Isabel.

"Whenever penance has been laid upon me I have doubled the amount, of my own accord; I have spent whole nights in prayer, prostrate on my face before the altar; I have tried to keep the ten commandments; to love God and my fellow-creatures, and to live a holy life, without thoughts of the world and without sin."

"My dear Leonore," Isabel replied, "I see no benevolence in your reception here, for a teacher like you could command a fine salary; the Sisters, by se-

curing you as one of their number, have your whole services, and you receive in return only a coarse stuff gown, a hard pallet, and coarse food."

"And *heaven!*" said Leonore.

"No, no, not for your faithful life of prayers and penance. If these alone could save the sinner, why did Christ die at all? I do not profess to be a Christian, but I know that the Bible says, 'By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.' And this I have often heard my mother say."

"If we strive to do all we can, sweet Isabel, to merit salvation, Christ will help us with his powerful arm, especially if we have the intercessions of his blessed Mother."

"Could he not have imparted that strength from heaven, and never have come to earth at all to suffer? How would it be with a dying soul, which, although repentant, had no time for penance and good works?"

"It could then have masses said which would deliver it from purgatory. This is a resort which your belief denies you," said Leonore.

"But if he had no friends and no money?"

"Alas, then, unless the saints have pity on him!" said Leonore, crossing herself.

"Do you think, dear Sister Leonore," asked Isabel, "that there will be any deficiency to be made up by masses when you are gone?"

"Yes, ten thousand! I have not loved God with

my whole heart,—I have not lived a perfectly holy life."

"Well, I fear there will not be as many masses said for you as for the young Portuguese nun who died among them. Her father's coffers were thrown open to pay tribute to his superstition. Why were more prayers said for her soul than for the soul of that cross old Sister Bridget? She *needed less*, surely."

Leonore did not answer, but looked sad. Isabel then repeated to her the story of Mary Flynn and the Sisters of the Heart of Mercy, adding, "Although I went into the church, I never heard mass said but once for poor John, and his sister paid a great deal for it. I am much afraid there were so many new and *richer* souls to be prayed for, that he was forgotten.

"I love *you*, and admire many things connected with your worship; but I fear that with most of the priests and nuns money is the moving power, and I dread to have you die trusting in the name of your church."

"I entreat you not to shake my foundation *now*," said Leonore, "as you have no firmer one to offer. If you had real faith in your own religion, you would grasp at its offers of free salvation for yourself. God help me to fix my hope on his dear Son, and pardon all my errors of weakness or ignorance! But henceforth we must talk no more on disputed points."

Isabel was ashamed that, after having confessed to Leonore that she had no hope of heaven for herself, she should have recommended another religion to her friend. She felt the inconsistency, and saw that she

had need to seek earnestly her own salvation. She saw, too, Leonore's beautiful character, apparently the fruit of her religion; her sweet submission to God's will in all her trials, and her willingness either to toil unrewarded on earth or ascend to a home where bolts and bars are not needed to shut out the world and its sin. Then she looked at her own proud heart, and saw how unwilling she was that God should dispose of her and of those she loved as He pleased,— how almost angry she felt at the prospect of losing Leonore,—and her faith was shaken. She was bewildered.

For some days and nights she prayed long at the altar; for thus her taste was gratified, her dying friend was made happier, and, almost unconsciously to herself, a deeper feeling was at work within to draw her thither. "O that I knew the way to heaven," she would sometimes say, "and had grace to walk therein!"

"A tree is known by its fruit." Judged by this standard, the faith of Sister Leonore shone brightly; but Isabel knew not that beneath, or mingled with, the rubbish of a corrupt system lay the seed of truth, "the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth forever," and that this seed had been lodged in Leonore's heart. Neither was Leonore herself as yet fully aware that in the deep experience of her soul she was resting upon Christ and his finished work, so much had a popish education and prejudices dimmed her spiritual vision, and caused an undue estimate of outward observances. In her case it seemed to require the clearer

light of an opening eternity to reveal the hidden spring of her peace and hope. As she began to feel the shadows of death come over her, she found herself letting go all other supports but death's Conqueror. She felt then her perfect weakness and insufficiency, and thought alone of Him who had hung on Calvary and become the "first-fruits of them that slept." Then new light from heaven seemed to beam upon her departing spirit. "O, Jesus!" she exclaimed, "Son of God, Son of Mary, receive my spirit!"

Thus she breathed her last, trusting alone in the Redeemer's merits, in the faith of whom she had walked for years, though in connection with more or less of speculative error. It was His secret strength that had carried her through so many trials.

Ah! God only knows how many of his hidden ones are thus feeling their way dimly to heaven through the gloom of an apostate church,— *in* that church, but not *of* it; for that church has truth enough to save the soul, if only separated from the chaff. Alas! the imminent danger that the dense errors of her faith will utterly blind the minds of her votaries, and lead them down to death! Here and there the Spirit of God may beget such a sense of personal sinfulness and helplessness, and such a sympathy with saving truth, in souls still in external communion with Rome, as may cause them to lay hold on Christ. Such were Thomas à Kempis, Fenelon, Pascal, Martin Bos, Van Ess, and Madame Guion. Their hands, divinely guided, reached through the thick growth of

untruths around them and grasped the almost hidden "tree of life." So was it, we doubt not, with Leonore. She sought after that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." And, although she was the child of ignorant devotion from the cradle, it may be better for her, in the last day, than for many who were instructed in the Bible from childhood, and taught to kneel beside the family altar, but to whom all was in vain through unbelief. Their proud hearts would not yield to God, and theirs must be the condemnation of such as knew their Master's will and did it not.

Reared as Leonore was in the doctrines of Rome, she thought no more of examining the Protestant system with a view to embracing it if found true, than would the children of Christian parents think, for such a purpose, of investigating Mohammedanism. The only Protestants she ever knew were those who had wronged her. They betrayed the holy cause they professed to love; and, instead of striving to win the gentle girl to a purer faith, they ridiculed that in which she trusted, and branded indiscriminately its priests as knaves and its votaries as fools. Thus was a golden time, given to win a soul to Christ, spent in inflicting pangs which almost broke her spirit. What must be their account in the day of judgment?

CHAPTER X.

> No wild enthusiast ever yet could rest,
> Till half mankind were like himself possessed.
>
> COWPER.

O, HOW lonely and desolate to Isabel were those days which followed the burial of Leonore! How her bursting heart loathed her books, her music and her pencil! How insufferable became the presence of the bigoted Sister Mary, and how dull her teachings, when compared with those of her lovely predecessor! Even her attempts at affectionate ways to gain Leonore's place in the hearts of her pupils made her more disagreeable. Besides, Isabel could see that she was quite incompetent to fill the vacant place. Her playing, which she rarely ventured to display, was old-fashioned and out of taste; her French was by no means adapted to a Parisian ear; and her painting! — but, fortunately for the young ladies and for herself, she discovered, after two attempts at giving lessons, that the smell of oil-paints made her ill.

Isabel felt great respect for the Lady Superior, whose bland and dignified manners bespoke her of the highest social rank in her native land. She had come to this country a few years before, accompanied by six young

nuns, to establish a convent in our great western valley; but, while in Washington, where they had letters of importance to deliver, and business to transact with some dignitaries of the church, she was importuned to forego her purpose. This convent where Isabel was now residing was then destitute of a Superior, death having recently removed from the office an accomplished woman, whose place it was not easy to fill. The importance of *this particular* field of labor was set before her in glowing colors, and of *this time*, as promising to gather in a golden harvest of youthful souls to the holy mother church. There were Gen. A. and Major B., who, for political motives, thought of placing their daughters in the convent for education, but who would on no account do so unless the best advantages could be offered. Large promises of endowments and other strong inducements were held out. The lady conferred with the six Sisters, who were as her children. They were distressed at the thought of a separation in this strange land, but yielded their consent on condition of her retaining Sister Bridget, who had been as a watch-dog to them by sea and land. So, when all was settled, the five nuns, in company with a father-confessor, bent their steps westward.

It was soon evident that the shrewd clergy had not erred in their estimate of the lady's character. Her elegant appearance and polished manners gained the admiration of all. It was, moreover, becoming quite genteel to send girls to a convent for education; and

within a few weeks nine Protestant young ladies had been admitted as scholars.

It was the province of Sister Bridget to watch and bark;—and woe to the offender! She was reported to the Superior in no soft terms; but never was the punishment as severe as the ruthless Sister would have inflicted, had she been executioner as well as spy.

Owing to the close intimacy which had subsisted between Isabel and Sister Leonore, no one had seemed to feel much responsibility about her; but now that Sister was gone, and another must take her place. Who should it be? This question occupied not a little the Lady Superior's thoughts. It was important to keep the influence which had been gained over the mind of Isabel. But the high-minded girl was too unhappy in her loneliness and too independent in her feelings to long await their decision in silence. She requested an interview with the Superior, which was granted; and one evening, not many weeks after the death of Leonore, she was seated in the private parlor of that lady.

"Surely, my love," said the Superior, "you do not feel that you have a right to complain! Death has taken Leonore away. That could not have been prevented by any foresight of ours. She is a greater loss to us than to you; but we must submit to the will of Heaven."

"That is all true," replied Isabel; "but of course, madam, it is my duty to improve my time in my

father's absence. My object in visiting your room was to inquire who was to fill the place of our dear Sister Leonore. While we have no competent teachers, of course our time is lost."

"Does not Sister Mary attend to your French, music and painting?" asked the Superior.

"Sister Mary! Dear madam," exclaimed Isabel, "are you not aware that she cannot teach us? She can play a few old-fashioned marches and overtures, and read a little French; but she cannot paint at all. I have a sister, fifteen years old, who could teach Sister Mary for years to come!"

"Is it possible?" asked the Superior, whose forte lay in elegance rather than in accurate and sound learning. "I had hoped to rely upon her till the close of this year."

"And after that, madam?" asked Isabel.

The nun arose, and, approaching Isabel, said, in gentle tones, "Did not your beloved Leonore enjoin on *you* to fill her place when she was no more? — to consecrate yourself as a bride of Heaven?"

"No, never!" answered Isabel. "She knew my views too well to do so. Leonore was no bigot herself, and she did not wish to make a hypocrite of me!"

"No bigot, my dear, but a true Christian; and it was alone for want of strength that she did not address you on the subject. It was her dying request that you might fill her place. A dying request, my daughter, is more binding than the most solemn vow. Leonore

sees you from heaven,—is perhaps now your guardian angel, listening to your decision. Beware, lest you grieve her by betraying her confident hopes! Beware, my daughter!"

"But, my dear madam, my object in troubling you at this time was to ask your leave to visit my friends, until you have a competent teacher."

The Lady Superior looked confused. "Where do your friends reside, my love?" she asked.

"In Massachusetts," replied Isabel. "My sister is there, with our mother's sister."

"Why did she not come here to be with you?"

"Her friends thought her too young," said Isabel; "but, if life is spared us another year, we must be together. Have I your consent for my journey, madam?"

The nun was taken by surprise. She asked many questions about her friends in New England, and then said, with some embarrassment, "Do you intend to return, if you go away, my daughter?"

Isabel's cheeks flushed like crimson. Her honor was doubted. "Madam," she said, "I believe I am under no bonds to remain here. If I wished to leave, I need not use deception: I could tell you so at once. My aunt made an engagement for me, through Mrs. Latour, for one year, on condition that I should be well treated. I have been so treated by all, and intend to remain till the year closes. It was not my intention to take my trunks. If, however, you have any fears about me, I will advance my winter's bill,

to insure my return. If you shall secure a teacher in Leonore's place, I shall come back; if not, you are welcome to the money."

"The money, my love, would be a poor compensation for the loss of your society. Leonore was not the only one here who loved you; but our sweet sister so monopolized you that the others had but little opportunity to manifest their affection. A deep interest is felt in you, and just at this time your absence would be a double loss. You have heard your aunt and Mrs. Latour speak of Gen. Gray's daughters?"

"I have," replied Isabel. "My aunt was induced to send me here by the interest she felt in them."

"Well, love, a third daughter, nearly your own age, is expected here soon, to finish her education. I am sorry to say that some vile persons, probably those who have received money for instructing her, have disaffected her mind so much that she is very sad at the prospect of coming to us. I have looked to you for aid in her case. Being, like yourself, a Protestant, she will place confidence in you, and you could render her happy in your society."

"But why do they send her here against her wishes?" asked Isabel.

"Because they are aware, my daughter," the holy mother replied, "that no such advantages for an elegant education are offered as in a Catholic convent; and, as in duty bound, her parents insist upon her coming here. She is a young lady of great beauty and loveliness of character, but naturally so gay and

fond of company, that she dreads the restraint of this holy house. Money is no object whatever with her father; but he is anxious to render his youngest child happy, for she is a great pet at home."

"I fear they will be sadly disappointed," replied Isabel, "when they learn how limited is Sister Mary's ability to teach. How soon, madam, do you expect this young lady?"

"In about six weeks. How long time do you wish to spend with your friends?" asked the lady, with a troubled and anxious expression. "This," she said, without waiting an answer from Isabel, "this is indeed a sad affair, to be left thus, with only Sister Mary to depend on at such an important time!"

"She certainly is very incompetent for her duties," said Isabel.

"Gen. Gray will, of course, wish to converse with her, and will judge of our house by what he sees of our teacher," said the Superior. "He has friends also who think of sending their daughters here."

Isabel began to press the question of her visit. The Superior seemed very reluctant to consent, and yet unwilling to cross her wishes. She therefore promised to think of the matter; and, after exhorting her fair pupil to fidelity in her prayers and other religious duties, she drew from her bosom a little pearl box, of fine workmanship. This she held up, and, drawing Isabel toward her, said, "Here, my daughter, is a legacy from sweet Leonore. May it have talismanic power to keep you in the path of truth! Carry

it at daybreak and sunset to the altar, as she did for you, and, with your eyes upon it, offer up your petitions. She will watch you from on high, my love," said the holy mother, with deep solemnity, "to see if you make good use of her cross and rosary!"

"A cross and rosary!" exclaimed Isabel. "But why, when she knew I was a Protestant, did she leave this for me?"

"Adieu now, daughter!" said the Superior, kissing her tenderly, and opening the parlor-door.

Isabel withdrew, amazed at the gift, and fully resolved to visit her friends, whether she received the Superior's permission or not.

In the morning the Superior summoned her to her room, and, when she was seated, took her hand tenderly, and said: "My dear, I have thought much of your request, and feel very unwilling to deny you any pleasure. It would be a great disappointment to me to lose your aid just at this time. You have, however, my full permission to go; but, should you decide to remain, I should take it as an act of real kindness to myself, which I could not easily forget."

The generous heart of Isabel instantly relinquished all thought of her visit, rejoiced to have an opportunity of doing a deed of love to any one.

Thus, while the way to win the hearts of most people is to do them a kindness, there are a noble few whose love may more easily be won by asking a favor of them. To this class belonged Isabel; and from

that hour she loved more dearly the Lady Superior, and was ever ready to obey her wishes.

She was thrown upon her own judgment in regard to her course of study; but, as a hope was held out of soon having a competent teacher, she toiled on as best she could under the nominal instruction of Sister Mary. Being conscientious in the improvement of her time and resolved to gratify her father upon his return, she read many useful books, and applied herself with double diligence to her daily duties.

CHAPTER XI.

> And is there who the blessed Cross wipes off
> As a foul blot from his dishonored brow ?—
> If angels tremble, 't is at such a sight.
>
> YOUNG.

A YEAR had now flown away since Mr. McIver left his children. Repeated letters gave strong hopes of his restoration to *them*, if not to perfect health. Gladly were these letters, so full of interesting descriptions of foreign lands, welcomed by all the young people at Brookside. In one, written from the absent father to Mr. Vail, much anxiety was expressed on Isabel's account. He said that her first letters to him were silent with regard to herself, aside from her studies. He did not wonder at this, as he well knew all letters there were read by the Superior before being mailed; but he had often feared that she was shutting up in her own heart home-sick feelings, which she longed to reveal to him. But of late her letters had assumed a different character, and were full of the praise of the Superior, whom she called a dear mother. He could not understand the sudden change, and his fears were excited for her, aware as he was that the natural melancholy of her disposition

would make her an easy victim to the wiles of her teachers. He also feared that his sister might have mentioned to Mrs. Latour the amount of money Isabel would receive in the event of his death abroad. He stated that he had made a new will, annulling the former in case either child should enter a convent. This he wished the Sisters to know. He did not wish to treat them rudely by writing directly to them on the subject; and it was useless to write to Isabel, as she would never receive such a letter from their hands. He was surprised at his blindness in allowing her to be sent there at first, and stated that the objections he then had were greatly increased by what he had seen and heard of like institutions abroad. He wished Mrs. Vail to urge a visit from Isabel, and to lay this letter before her should they think there was any ground for his fears. He wrote cheerfully and hopefully, and the warm heart of Virginia was buoyed up by the picture of a happy home which the future still held out before them.

The soft winds of the early summer wafted home the ship in which was the young physician. The raptures of his aged parents at the return of an only child, and the warm greeting of his boyhood's friends, could not long satisfy him. From his earliest school-days he had loved Jane Vail; and, although the bond between them was partially severed, he felt, when he reached home, that the flame still burned brightly, and that it was she who of all others made that home

so dear to him. "I must see the family at the parsonage," he said to his mother; "for I still admire them all above every family in town. Mr. Vail, I suppose, will rejoice if our engagement is finally broken; for he only gave his consent in the first place after urging every objection in vain. Jane has a mind of her own, although she is so gentle."

A note to Anna was kindly answered, saying that all the family would be glad to see him, and regretting that he used so much formality as to ask permission to call. This cordiality at once broke down all fears as to his reception, and assured him that his last letter, written in a spirit of vexation, however much it might have wounded the heart of Jane, had not given offence to the older members of the family. The evening found him one of the home party. Jane was present, and met him as did the others. She was small and frail and child-like; but within was the strong, true woman's heart, and she shrunk from no sacrifice which her duty demanded. She had, in her answer to Richard Campbell's last letter, offered freely to release him from a bond which might become a snare to her, and which she thought was even now a miserable bondage to him. No answer was returned to this; and, although she was yet his betrothed, she felt that in reality the tie between them was broken. She had given herself to One dearer than any earthly friend, and into His hand she had committed this matter, cheerfully awaiting His decision.

After an hour pleasantly spent in conversation with the family, Anna, Sam, and Virginia withdrew, leaving the young physician with Mrs. Vail and Jane. After alluding to the letters which had passed between them, the mother kindly said, "You well remember, Richard, that I told you, years ago, that your taste and Jane's were too unlike to render such a union happy. For the sake of both I opposed it as long as I did. Since then the difference between you has increased rather than diminished, and I think it would be for the happiness of all parties to come to a decision in this matter. Would it not be well to say, after this evening, that your former engagement is dissolved by mutual consent?"

"Mrs. Vail," replied the young man, "I have no wish to break my engagement. I hope you remember that this proposal came from Jane herself, but that I have not as yet acceded to it."

"She took that step because she saw, by your last letter, that you were made unhappy by the change in her feelings and pursuits," replied the mother.

"I was made unhappy, but only because I saw that this change in her would sever us; although the reason for this necessity I cannot see," answered Richard.

"You could not be happy if you and your wife were pursuing different objects of happiness. Two cannot walk together unless they be agreed."

"And why, my dear madam," asked the young man, "can we not be agreed? I am willing to make

any concession, and if Jane will but yield some of her prejudices, the obstacles will all be removed."

"What do you mean by concessions, Richard?" asked Jane, calmly.

"Why," said the young man, hesitatingly, "why, for instance, I should never interfere with your religion, you should go into such society as best suited you, I would accompany you to church half a day, and —"

"And what should you expect me to do?" asked Jane.

"Whatever pleased yourself," he replied, looking tenderly on her, "and it would all be right in my eyes."

"Would you expect me to entertain gay parties, attend the theatre occasionally, and go half a day to the other church?"

"I'll entertain the parties myself," he answered, "and as to the theatre, my business will prevent me going into town as I used to do. But I should like you and myself to pay enough respect to my dear aged parents to sit half a day in their pew. You know, Jane, I am all the child they have."

"And many parents receive less attention from a large family than yours do from one. But I would not do wrong to please my own dear mother."

"What do you think Mr. Hale preaches about?" he asked; "you never heard him, but have some horrid ideas of his theology. He urges as strict a morality, and as true a love to our neighbor, as does your

father. And, if you were away from your present home, others would not be influenced by you to desert your father's church. You would no longer be looked up to as the pastor's daughter."

"I could never sit in a church where every week my Saviour is crucified afresh, and put to an open shame. I have firmly resolved to do nothing which will wound his cause; and," she added, struggling with emotion, "I trust he will give me strength to keep my resolution."

The young man looked puzzled, but made no reply.

"Richard," said Mrs. Vail, "I wish you would tell me, with the candor you were so famous for when a boy, just what you think of Jane's decision, and of her present position."

"I think, Mrs. Vail," he replied, "that she either never loved me at all, or that she has become very fanatical since I left home. Her views, as you wish me to be frank, seem all moonshine to me, from beginning to end."

"Then, my dear young friend, how could you respect a wife of whose judgment you thought so little?" asked the mother.

"I not only respect but also *love* you, Mrs. Vail; and yet your views are the same as hers."

"But," asked the lady, "if I should tell you to-night that I had cast away as worthless the faith I hold, and that I knew nothing, believed nothing, and feared nothing, would you not respect me more than you now do?"

"I think I should respect you more; I should admire your independence in daring to throw off the chains with which you are bound."

"Just so. And would you not be happier with a lady who had no such strict notions as Jane has?—one who could visit the theatre, ball-room and opera with you, and who would go to any church, or to none, as should suit your inclination?"

"I could be very happy with Jane if such were her tastes; but, as to any other lady, no one else could make me happy, let her be what she would."

"Well, Richard, my advice to you is that you release Jane from her engagement; but I trust you will always be a friend to us all."

"Your advice is hard to follow," he replied; "but as to being a friend to you all,—what else could I be? You have always treated me kindly, from a boy; and I don't think I ever forgot one kindness in my life."

"And, Richard," said the lady, "remember that when I bring my own dear children before the Redeemer I shall not forget you. Think of this, night and morning. Friends we must be, for when your father is not able to go out you will be our physician."

"You are pledging me to a cold friendship, Mrs. Vail," he said, smiling sadly, "but, remember, I have not yet said that I would relinquish Jane, nor shall I say *the word* to-night. I wish first to see her alone, and hear her own views more freely."

"Although I am very anxious to have this painful

matter settled, I am willing you should converse as much as you please with Jane. You are too honorable to wish her to act against her conscience, and I have too much confidence in her religious character to doubt her firmness."

"I shall not try to shake her faith, for it is quite harmless; but really I do not think it is of sufficient importance to separate us. One word hastily spoken now may make us both miserable for life. Our views of religion may be different, and yet we may be happy together," said the young man.

"Our views of religion! What are *your* views of religion?" asked Mrs. Vail of her young friend.

He smiled sadly, and said, "You must not catechize me very closely, Mrs. Vail, for I am but a poor theologian."

"But you can tell what you believe, Richard," said Jane; "I never knew more than that you dislike the restraint which orthodoxy imposes on its adherents."

As Mrs. Vail silently withdrew from the parlor, he replied,

"I can hardly tell you what my belief is. I have held many different sentiments. When I was a boy, I remember thinking that your father alone preached the truth, in this place. But his preaching made me miserable, so did reading the Bible, because I did not live as that required. I was at one time so wretched I could not study at school, and *almost* went to your father one night to converse with him."

"Why did you not do so?" asked Jane.

"Because I felt that I had no right to tax his time. I had a claim on the old parson; so I went there and told him just how I felt. He advised me to cast off all my gloomy feelings, and go out into the world and enjoy all that God had made for our happiness. I told him I was miserable, and until my heart became more pure it was painful to me to feel that God's eye was upon me. He looked at me in amazement, and said he had always thought me a moral boy, but feared now lest I had been led into some great sin; and advised me to confess it and ease my conscience, pledging his honor never to betray me. I told him I had no such sin to confess, and then he said he suspected I had been influenced by some companion who attended your father's church. He had always noticed that the effect of the sentiments there preached was to degrade a man in his own esteem, and to destroy all self-respect. This I knew to be true, for since I began to look into the doctrines your father taught I seemed like another being to myself. He then told me to seek relief to my mind in gay amusements, and said that if those thoughts were of myself they would soon flee, but if they came from God, as I thought they did, my weak efforts could not avail against His strong arm."

"But God might leave you to your own choice, when you refused to listen to his call," said Jane.

"Well," replied the young man, "I took the parson's advice, and my wretchedness soon wore off, as he said it would; and although for a long time I still

held to the doctrines of Scripture, I never saw myself such a desperado again."

"Richard," said the young girl, solemnly, "there is a passage in the Scriptures where God says, 'Because I have called and ye refused; ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.' This call you had when a boy, and the threatening — O, I pray God that may never be fulfilled in your case!"

"Then," said the young man, as if he had not been interrupted in the relation of his views, "I used to think all religions were right enough, if the believers in them were only sincere; that a faithful Catholic, Hindoo, Mohammedan, or follower of Christ, would all reach heaven,— if there be a heaven."

"What a strange heaven it would be!" said Jane. "The Bible says that 'as the tree falleth, so it must lie;'—therefore, each of those you mention would enter there with the same claim he held on earth:—the Hindoo, saved through human sacrifices; the Mohammedan, by his pilgrimage, with bleeding feet, to Mecca's holy city; the Roman Catholic, through cruel penance, and prayers to the Mother of Christ; and the followers of the Redeemer, through faith in His blood! How could the same heaven satisfy them all?"

"And yet they all expect to get there," replied Richard, "and, if the hope makes them happy, no matter what they build it on."

"But one only of all these religions can be the true

foundation," said Jane; "and how will it be with those who build on the sand, hereafter?"

"Hereafter! ah, I know little about hereafter," replied he, shaking his head.

"This was your second belief, Richard," said Jane; "now tell me, if you please, what you believe *now*."

"Dear Jane," he answered, after some hesitancy, as if he was forced to speak what he would rather conceal, "I have believed everything, but I must confess that since I left home I have cast off the entire subject. I really believe nothing I do not understand."

"If I could only induce you to examine the claims which the religion of Jesus presents to our belief, I'm sure you would embrace it," said Jane.

"If ever a man had a powerful motive for casting away his reason, I have," replied the young man; "and, if my soul did not abhor hypocrisy, I should at once declare myself a believer, and thereby secure all I care for on earth. But, while I retain my reason, and remain an honest man, I can never believe such doctrines as your father preaches."

"Don't say so, Richard; for millions, whose reason is as sound as yours, and their honesty as firm, have embraced with their whole heart the gospel of Christ."

"What are we doing now, Jane, but arguing on religious topics? — and that is what I promised your mother not to do. Now you know my heart, and I assure you that, notwithstanding my heresy, I have kept aloof from all immorality, and am as true to you as you

are to your faith. If you are not too bigoted, dear Jane, to take me just as I am, I shall make you the happiest wife in the town. If you decide otherwise, you must say the word that severs us. I shall not take the responsibility."

"If I, for your happiness, as well as from a sense of duty on my part, break our engagement, shall you look on the act as wrong?"

"Certainly not, Jane, for I have given you full permission to act your pleasure in the matter. Indeed, I would not marry any lady if I knew there was the least thing in me she wished otherwise," he added, with a look of sensitive pride.—"I shall abide your decision." And with a kind "good-night" he departed.

A week of thoughtful days and anxious nights passed away, and Jane still adhered to her resolution to forsake *all* for Christ. She felt that her outward profession of love would be but the kiss of betrayal, should she immediately give her best earthly love to an enemy of His cause.

CHAPTER XII.

A politician, Proteus-like, must alter
His face and habit, and, like water, seem
Of the same color that the vessel is
That doth contain it, varying his form
With the chameleon, at each object's change.

MASON.

"My heart in chains is bleeding;
I dream of all things free."

"O, DEAR me!" cried the beautiful Mary Gray, "it seems as if the fates had all conspired against me! Cast out from my own dear home and shut up in this doleful old convent, I was tempted to end my days, till you dawned on me, dear Isabel; and now you too must be taken from me! Do come back again, if only for my sake."

"I think I shall return after a few weeks, although I could not promise the Superior, as she wished me to do. I must first see my aunt and sister, and read recent letters from my dear father."

"Don't you think it was really cruel in my father to send me here, when he knew how fond I was of going out, and seeing friends at home?" asked Mary.

"No doubt he thought it the best thing he could do for you," replied Isabel. "Many think the advantages greater for a young lady in a convent than in any other establishment."

"*You* don't think so, Isabel," said Mary, looking in her eyes.

"Our Mother here," replied Isabel, "does the best she can for us all, and, if I saw any defect in her system, I 'm sure it would be ungenerous in me to speak of it."

"Isabel," said the shrewd girl, "I am confident you think the school is miserable. I know it is so, and you, who are so much wiser than I, must see it more plainly. I wish my father could hear that old nun play and sing! It would really set his teeth on edge, for he has a fine ear for music. Poor Mamma! they really tore me away from her. I was all the company she had; for Pa's head is so full of politics, and the girls' of levees and soirées, that she hardly sees them. And she is so feeble, too! I used to walk with her, and read and sing to her; but I reckon she leads a lonely life now — dear Mamma!"

"Your father must have a high opinion of the school, and of Catholics, when he sent you here so much against the will of your mother," said Isabel.

"He *has* not, for I have heard him say as much against Catholics and nunneries as any one. I used to hear him and his friends talk at table about the Catholic influence, which they greatly feared was increasing in the country. I 've no doubt they laugh at Pa now;" and the giddy girl smiled at the remembrance of her father's inconsistency.

"Your father must have had some good reason for so sudden a change in his feelings."

"Did you not know, my dear girl, that Pa is a candidate for Governor?" asked Mary. "He is a good, kind father, and would sacrifice anything for his children, but his ambition."

"But, my dear Mary," said Isabel, "I see no connection between his being a candidate for Governor and placing you in a convent-school."

"Why, Isabel! where have you lived all your days?" asked Mary. "Not in this region, I'm sure, or you would see the connection at once. When my father was a candidate for the same office before, he and Dr. L., and several other friends, all at once discovered that they had been greatly deceived in their opinion of the Catholics. They suddenly found that they were an abused people, who hardly enjoyed toleration among us, and that something ought at once to be done to ease the minds of their clergy with regard to the use of the Bible in the public schools. The next thing my dear father ascertained was, that no schools in our country could send out perfectly accomplished scholars but convent-schools. So off Sister Helen had to march from Madam Monteagle's, where she had been four years, to make wax flowers and learn embroidery in this place. She was here six months, and Sister Annie three; and now the nuns get all the credit of their accomplishments. Mamma says it was altogether lost time to them."

"But, Mary, why did not your sisters oppose such a course?" asked Isabel.

"Oppose it! Sister Helen, my dear girl, is Papa's

own child. She would crawl on her knees to Rome, and kiss the Pope's slipper, if thereby she could be the daughter of a President, or even of a Governor. Annie is very unlike her; she *will* study and improve her mind,—and, not finding things here as she had expected, she became so unruly that the old Sisters were right glad to get rid of her."

"You must pardon my stupidity, my dear Mary," said Isabel, "but really I do not yet see the bearing all this has on your father becoming Governor."

"Why, the Catholics, who are very numerous in our state, are bound to vote for the candidate who is most favorable to them; so, as Papa went several times to mass, had a priest and a bishop at our house to dinner, and sent the girls here to school, of course *he* was their man,—or thought he was, at least. But it was too late to have its *effect*, and he lost the election. But there 's another one ahead, and I 'm the victim this time on ambition's altar. Why, Isabel, it 's as bad as the heathen do, who throw their children into the Ganges; I hope I shall not be devoured, however, by the great political crocodile."

"But, my dear girl," said Isabel, "it is not right for you to judge and speak thus disrespectfully of your father's motives. You are bound to honor your father."

"And so I do," replied Mary; "I honor highly *the father;* mind you, it 's the *politician* I 'm speaking of just now. How can I honor the spirit which prompts a naturally upright man to deception and

double-dealing? A few years ago Papa severely censured our Chief-magistrate for raising a Roman Catholic to a high political station, saying that in so doing he proved traitor to his country. But *now*, when an end is to be answered, religious liberty and toleration are the constant themes, and our emigrant population are extolled. I used to hear them always spoken of as 'aliens' or 'foreigners;' but now it is as 'our respected Catholic population,' or 'our Irish fellow-citizens.'"

"But why," asked Isabel, "should not a Catholic fill an office of state, if he be a suitable man and a true republican?"

"If he be a true republican," answered Mary, "he ought to be eligible to any office. But that no true Catholic can be; at least, so I used to hear my father say; and you know they are all subjects of a crowned head, and swear allegiance to the Pope. With a true patriot, his country's good is foremost; but with Catholics, the Holy Mother Church claims the first and last thought,—everything is subservient to that."

"Why, Mary," said Isabel, "you are quite a politician yourself,—quite a little statesman. I never heard a lady talk on politics before."

"You may think yourself happy not to have been obliged to hear so much on the subject as I have done. I assure you it is no favorite topic with me. I have good reason to dislike it, for it has been the means of

destroying our happy home and estranging our father."

"Why does not your mother protest?" inquired Isabel.

"Why, my dear child, she protests all the time, or rather used to do so; but of late she lets things take their course, for she finds all she can do or say to be of no avail. She has no more influence over Papa now than the cook has. Our house is filled with company such as we never used to have, and Mamma's cares are doubled; but she does not mind that. Her conscience is troubled about many things she sees and hears; for my mother fears God, Isabel,—dear, dear Mamma!" And a burst of tears relieved the heart of the homesick girl.

"*My* father would never have sent me here," said Isabel, "had my mother been alive; for, some way or other, she had a great prejudice against convents, and seemed even to reverence her prejudices."

"Just so kind and tender was Papa a few years ago," said Mary; "but now he breakfasts alone in his room hours after we do; he dines out, or has company at home; his evenings are spent in political meetings or club-rooms, and he returns after we have all retired; so we see little of him. I once saw my dear patient Mamma weeping, and when I insisted on knowing her trouble, she said a crown could not repay her for the change in Papa, nor for the tears she had shed. She suffers greatly from fear lest I should be dazzled by the splendors of popery, as Helen was; but

her fears are all groundless, for I see through the hollow pretensions of these people. I was tempted last night at vespers to blow out all the wax candles, and exchange them for bread for the starving Irish. It would be more credit to them to have less light, and bestow more mercy on the thousands of their communion who beg in our streets and throng our almshouses. I don't believe they strive to lighten with their little finger the burden their people impose on us in the way of poor-tax and private charity. These nuns, I'm sure, give nothing."

"You are judging harshly, Mary," replied Isabel. "I felt just so when I first came here;" and a crimson blush spread itself over her sad young face, as she called to mind the feelings she had at the house of the Sisters of Charity, and the little cause she had since had to change them.

"And what do you think *now*, after a year has flown away?" asked Mary; "have you found good reason to change your views of nuns and convents?"

Isabel was startled, for she had scarcely allowed her own heart to question her so closely. "I think that I wronged them in thought, if not in word and deed; for I'm sure they lead a very self-denying life."

"Suppose they do,—what does their self-denial amount to? How many hungry does it feed, how many naked clothe, or how many tears does it dry up?"

"'Honor to whom honor,' dear Mary," replied

Isabel. "You surely have not forgotten so soon how kind they were to you when you were ill, last week."

"To me!" exclaimed Mary; "and were they not well paid for it? A barbarian will render you an equivalent for your money. No one who keeps boarders calculates to throw them out of doors when they are sick. Now, what good, holy deeds have you seen done since you came here, which could not have been done better abroad in the world of sorrow?"

Isabel paused before she attempted an answer. She first thought of the many prayers offered there; but they were no more availing than if offered elsewhere. Her mind ran from one labor to another; but her lips were sealed on that point.

"Could you only have known my sweet Leonore, you would never thus harshly accuse the whole sisterhood," she said.

"I doubt not that she was an angel of a nun, sent here for a season to bind up broken and homesick hearts; but I fear this generation will never again see the like of her in a convent. The inmates are usually middle-aged women, disgusted with life or disappointed in its hopes, who shut themselves out from the beautiful things of God, and then growl at those whom they see through their prison-bars. They labor as teachers, and receive in return a support, and have the certainty of being taken care of as long as they live. This is more than any of them could get outside the convent, for not one in ten of them could teach in the public

schools at the north. I fear they have secured you in the way mother feared they would reach me,—through a loving heart. They saw your *weak spot,* dear Isabel; and so, when the blessed Leonore was gone, the Lady Superior began to lavish her affection on you."

"Why on me more than on other scholars?" asked Isabel.

"For many reasons. There are not many Protestant girls here just now: some of these are gained, others are given up as hopeless; but you are in a transition state; and, if I am not mistaken, you are an object worth striving for. But beware how you give the least encouragement about taking the white veil;—that is a forerunner of the black veil,—and then comes a living death to such as you and I. O, life is too bright for us to give it up yet, Isabel."

"I should not think it would be brighter to you than to me, after what you 've been saying," said Isabel.

"We 're under the cloud now, but I am looking for sunshine soon," said Mary. "When this miserable election (which I hope Pa will lose) is over, Ma and I are going to win him back. He will see how false are all other friends and other hopes than those centred in his home, and come back to us, heart and soul."

"Is it right to desire the downfall of your father's political hopes, dear Mary?"

"Yes; because his future happiness depends upon

it. If father's and sister's ambition were once gratified, it would know no bounds hereafter. Should he once be Governor, he would next sigh for the Presidency, and then, for aught I know, for the Papal Chair! Only think, dear Isa, should he get there, he would have to shut up dear Ma in a convent, for you know the Popé can't follow the example of his apostolical predecessor, St. Peter, and have a wife."

"Is your sister a real Catholic *now?*" asked Isabel; "or was she only prepossessed in favor of that religion while here?"

"My sister is nothing in sincerity. She has gone back into the gay world she left for a time, and there finds all her enjoyment. She still, however, wears the cross and rosary, abstains from meat on Friday, and goes occasionally to mass. But should Papa, after all he has done, lose the election, I think her religion, rosary, cross, image and all, will be thrown away. Her eyes and his will then be opened to the true character of those who are flattering him, to accomplish their own schemes."

"Well, my dear," said Isabel, "you do not pretend to say that all Catholics are hypocritical."

"I believe many of them are very sincere, especially among the more ignorant. The blinder their eyes, the more earnestly do they press on, trying to grope their way to heaven. With them, 'ignorance is the mother of devotion.' But you see that, as the emigrants become prosperous and intelligent and associate with Americans, their confidence is shaken, and their hearts are

opened to the claims of a purer faith. Hundreds yearly either renounce Catholicism altogether, or silently slip from out the fold."

"I cannot deny what you say, Mary, because I am acquainted with no ignorant Catholics. All the Catholics here are as respectable and as intelligent as the Protestant scholars; but none seem very strict Catholics."

"Perhaps you are right, Isabel. And is it not a shame that it should be so,—that the poor are shut out from the means of knowledge? Of all the thousand half-clothed Irish children that crowd our streets or almshouses, not one can find a home here,—and this a charitable institution,—while poor Protestant girls will be received at any price! Why are not scores of their own poor children brought here to be cared for and instructed, if the nuns cannot go out into the world to do them good? What conceivable good is accomplished here?"

"As much as is professed to be done in any Protestant school of high order. This is a ladies' school, not an orphan asylum or almshouse."

"You 're right, my dear, it is neither of the latter; but you surely are aware that these nuns lay claim to a benevolence and self-denial in their labors to which Protestant teachers never pretend. There is no charity in their establishment; for while some Catholic girls, whose fathers are struggling to give them an education, pay the full price here for tuition, a Protestant girl can get in for half price, and in one instance my

sister procured for one in comfortable circumstances *free* admission."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Isabel, with a look of wonder. "That does not seem like the persecuting spirit with which you charged them. Surely this is loving their enemies, and doing good to those who hate them."

"Love is not the motive-power, but a spirit of proselytism. One soul gained from among heretics is worth compassing a world for."

"Well, Mary, I thank Heaven," said Isabel, "that I am not so uncharitable or suspicious of the motives of others. Did our teachers make no effort for our spiritual good, you would say that they cared not though we lost our souls. You are not your own noble self when you talk on this subject."

"Isabel," asked Mary, gravely looking in her eyes, as if to read her heart, "are you a Protestant or a Catholic?"

"I? Why, a Protestant, to be sure. Did you not know that?" rejoined Isabel.

"I knew that you were the child of Protestant parents, but it seems to me you are bending towards opposite views; and I predict that you will yet become a Roman Catholic," said Mary.

Isabel looked wounded, and said, "I am only defending the character of those who are not here to speak for themselves. Still, I admit"—and she hesitated—"I do admire much in their books and forms of worship. Convent life, also, has a charm for me; it accords with my feelings. If there was such

a sisterhood among Protestants, I believe I should join them."

"And I believe you will join *these*," said Mary, "and thus cast off a sick father and a young sister, who greatly need your care and guidance. This would be far from keeping God's command to obey and honor your parents. My sweet Isabel, I prophesy for your dowry a cell, a serge gown, a rosary, and a cross, with the inexpressible pleasure of killing yourself with labor, as Leonore did."

"It will take more than I have yet seen," said Isabel, "to make me abjure the faith of *my mother*."

"It will not take much, if you only venerate Protestanism because it was hallowed by your mother's acceptance. You will soon yield, and fall into the snare which is laid for you. Now, Isabel," continued Mary, "I am not a Christian, but I have a belief of my own, which is also my dear mother's faith. But, should she change her views to-morrow, it would not shake mine in the least. She has taught me reasons and principles, and to these I shall adhere as long as I believe them to accord with God's word. I hate all kinds of cant, Protestant or Catholic, and should honor these women if they came out boldly and said that they taught to enrich themselves, or their order. But no; it is all for *the good of the pupils*; and they, dear martyrs, sacrifice life and all its charms, and receive as the fruit of their toil crusts which a dog would not eat, and a hard bed. Some of them live just so, I doubt not, for they look starved and frozen;

but I guess the old Duchess and her favorites have grand lunches when we are asleep,— indeed, I smelt some savory dish the night I lay awake with the toothache."

"O, you giddy girl!" said Isabel. "But tell me what you meant by calling the Lady Mother a duchess?"

"Why, she is always talking of the high station she resigned, to come here and toil for the love of souls,— Protestant souls, remember. When speaking of people in this country, she calls them the *lower order*, or the *common people.* And, for my part, I am American enough to endure my being classed among them. I hope these Romanists may never succeed in their war against the interests of the *common* people. Woe to our nation when they can overthrow our *public schools!*"

"They say it is to *divide, not to overthrow them*, at which they are aiming," replied Isabel.

"Well, division is overthrow, in this case. 'Divide and conquer' is their motto; for they would not sustain such schools as we now have, were a portion of the public money given them. Let the poor emigrants *be educated and kindly treated, and they will make good citizens. But, while they in such masses remain* ignorant, they are a dangerous people, because they are the tools of designing men, who aim at the subversion of our liberties."

"Well, if these Sisters are misguided, they certainly sacrifice much feeling to live thus. If they are

wrong, I honor their consistency. Few women, for conscience' sake, would even dress as they do,"said Isabel.

"Why, Isabel, more thought and conversation has been devoted to dress here, within a few weeks, than at Almack's. Every day, at recreation, we hear nothing but about the new white cap which has taken the place of the old black one. I have been asked by each one how it became her, and each one has told me from what order of foreign nuns the fashion came to this country. I think it worse to take pride in a hideous-looking garment than in a becoming one, because it is a mockery of religion, which is worse than a mere sacrifice to woman's vanity. The head-dress makes all the poor, pale nuns look as if arrayed for their burial. Isabel, I often speak harshly, but I love many of these girls, and pity them all. Their lives are sad enough with all the love we can give them,—I mean the younger ones, for the very few who ever grow old in convents are the spirits born to rule. The others are always sad-looking, and often they come to us with eyes swollen with weeping. If these gates should be thrown open to-morrow by the strong arm of the law, I do not think more than five nuns would remain here of their own free choice. But, though their hearts are breaking with repentance of their romantic choice, or with longing for home and their mothers, they must keep it a secret; for no mother can receive a letter from her child immured here, unless it is filled with praise of the Superior, and allusions to her own happiness.

I suppose you are aware that, after the Sisters retire at night, Sister Peter Humility passes through the long dormitory, and takes their clothing all away, to be kept till morning. Now, why is this extreme care, if not to prevent the escape of the imprisoned girls? If it were in my power, I would take a dozen of them with me on the day of my own release."

"Your heart is kind, Mary," said Isabel, "and I wish you and I had more wisdom than we have to know the right way."

CHAPTER XIII.

Blessed are the homesick, for they shall reach home.
STILLING.

MR. and Mrs. Vail, with Virginia, Sam, and little Charlie, were returning from a visit in a remote part of the parish, just as the full clear moon was rising. The parents had been engaged in serious conversation, to which the younger of the party listened attentively. After a pause, Charlie, who had been gazing upward as he lay upon his mother's lap, raised himself and said, "Is heaven in the moon, *perhaps*, Papa?"

"What put that in your head, my boy?" asked the father.

"O, because it looked so peaceful and holy up there,— such a beautiful place to rest in,— I'm sure no one could have the headache there. I wish I was a bird with strong wings,— I would fly up and see; then I would come back and tell you, for I have heard you, Pa and Ma, say you did not know much about heaven yet. I wish I was a bird!"

"If you were a bird, my boy, you would have no soul,— you would not care to know about heaven," said the father.

"I would like to be *a boy with wings*, then,"

replied the pale child, "for I want to know where heaven is."

"We know enough about it, darling," said Mrs. Vail, "to make us very anxious to go there, and to have others go there too. Wherever heaven is, or whatever else is there, this we know, my love, *Christ is there;* and that would make any place lovely. There 's no headache where He is, my darling, "added the mother, as she kissed the brow on which the little thin hand was pressed.

"Yes, I remember that now," the child replied. "'T was in my Sabbath-school lesson, you know, Mamma,—'There shall be neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.'"

"Pa," asked Sam, "is that a man or a boy ahead of us? He is dressed like a man, but is too short."

"It is an Irishman, I think," said Mr. Vail, "probably coming to work on the rail-road."

"Why!" said Virginia, "his hat is large enough for an umbrella."

"Yes," said Sam, "an Irishman always wears a hat too big for him. If perchance he has one of the right size, or too small, you may be sure 't was a gift. Why is that, Virgie?"

"I don't know," was the reply; "although I have noticed that when decently dressed an Irishman always wears a great hat resting on his eyebrows. Perhaps it is that he may get his money's worth, for a large hat costs no more than a small one."

"Sam," said Mr. Vail, turning round as they

passed the miniature man, "I really think that is Jim McCorkle."

"I thought he walked like him," said Sam; "but it cannot be he, sir. Jim has his winter-quarters in the House of Correction; and, besides, how could he get a long-tailed coat and a man's hat?"

"O, the old lady could easily manage that. She is not so poor as Mamma takes her to be," said Mr. Vail. "I should not be surprised, after all, if the priest had interested himself to get Jim out; his mother's tongue can accomplish almost anything. I will wait a few moments, till he comes up."

But a few minutes did not suffice to produce the traveller. Sam looked out, and saw in the moonlight the figure beneath a tree, seated on a stone. He called out "Jim!" but silence followed,— it was either a stranger, or one who wished to be thought such.

"I'll find out to-morrow whether that is my old fellow-laborer in the wood-lot," said Sam. "I suppose he has run off in disguise."

"Mamma," said Anna, as soon as they entered the house, "your old *protégée*, Mrs. McCorkle, has been here, in great distress, inquiring for you. Some Irishman who works at the dépôt came in from Boston to-day, and told her that, unless she could raise twenty dollars to pay the fine, Jim would be sent to the State-prison. She seems half distracted about him, and says she'll never see him again."

"I rather think she'll see him to-night," said Sa[m]
"and I should not wonder if he had absconded, an[d]

if she knew he was coming, too. She, no doubt, had a finger in his escape, and means to secrete him!"

"I really wish you would not have her coming here, Ma!" said Anna. "So long as she comes you can do Nora no good, for the poor thing stands in great awe of her. The old woman not only scolded her well for coming in to prayers, but also reported her to the priest. See her deception. After all that, she asks to come in to worship herself, when here, and sheds tears, and seems so pleased with what she hears! She has some understanding with the priest, or she would fear being reported by Nora."

"Anna, she is welcome to all she sees or hears here. Her deception can injure no one but herself," said Mrs. Vail.

"I don't know that, Mamma!" said the shrewd girl. "I have my fears that the old lady has had a mission appointed her here. I overheard her asking Nora 'when the swate nun was coming.' Nora did not know whom she meant; and she told her Father O'Keefe wished to know when Isabel came, for he had letters about her. She says she is a swate Catholic, and has money enough to build a church all herself; but that we all hate and persecute her."

"Is it possible that he already knows about Isabel, and is setting his trap for her?" exclaimed Mr. Vail. "He will, I trust, be disappointed in his prey, this time. I should not let Mrs. McCorkle see Isabel at all," he said to Mrs. Vail. "I would not gratify her desire to proselyte. I see through the plan. The

nuns have written to the priest to watch over Isabel; and, as he cannot well do so while she is here, he is making a tool of Mrs. McCorkle. Surely they are 'wiser in their generation than the children of light.' A young girl cannot leave school, to visit her friends, but a correspondence takes place, and a watch is kept over her. But God can deliver the prey from the power of the lion. Their jealous cunning should be a rebuke upon our neglect in watching for souls."

"O, uncle!" said Virginia, "how strange it seems that we had to urge a visit from sister! — she felt so conscientiously opposed to going to a nunnery, and so impatient for her year to close! Now, she seems to love that holy mother — as she calls the Superior — more than her dear sick father or her sister. If she should become a Catholic, how would our mother feel in heaven, if she could know it there!"

"My dear Virginia," said Mr. Vail, "I hope Isabel will not be led astray from the true faith; but, should she be, our anxiety ought rather to be how she would appear in the sight of a holy God than in the sight of her mother. God spared your pious mother long enough to instruct you well in the truths of religion. For this inestimable blessing you are accountable to *Him*. I have feared lest all you young people, through sincere respect for your parents, may have taken their word on these points, instead of searching God's word for yourselves. If you are building your belief alone on your parents, you will fall an easy prey to the wily. Have you, Virginia,

ever examined the Bible for yourself, to see whether the doctrines we hold agree with its divine teachings?"

"No, sir," replied Virginia; "because I never had a doubt of their truth. Still, I believe I could, without examination, mention proof-passages for every doctrine."

"Well," replied the father, "we will look at this subject together. There are many foes to the simple doctrines of the gospel, and you all need to be well armed for their defence."

"Let us wait till sister comes," said Virginia, "that she, too, may have the benefit of the examination."

"Would it not be better to begin to-morrow?" asked Mrs. Vail, "or Isabel may think your researches have special reference to her."

"I do not intend," replied her husband, "to enter into long and intricate arguments, but simply to examine God's word to ascertain what is truth. Guided by *that*, we cannot go astray. A woe is written against such as not only take from, but add to, the words of that book. As long as we adhere closely to the gospel in its revealed simplicity we are in no danger; but, once allow any addition to it, and we are afloat upon a sea of human speculation, and may take up with cunningly-devised fables. To-morrow, dears, we will begin to look over this matter, and I will propose a plan to be pursued in the examination."

To-morrow! O, delusive word! How many, be-

fore this loving father, have said *to-morrow* with reference to hopes never to be realized! It was to all this happy band a sad to-morrow, for they watched and wept beside the frail little household darling. To *him* alone it was a bright day; for it brought him nearer to the home he so much longed for, where "they shall no more say, I am sick," even to the bosom of Him "whom, not having seen, he loved."

The morning sun, which usually awakened joy in this family circle, revealed the fever burning on the cheek and kindling in the eye of precious Charlie. Lessons were forgotten, all unnecessary work laid aside, and the long-expected visitor almost passed out of mind. All thoughts were centred on one hallowed spot — the crib in the study, for thither the little invalid had asked to be moved. Every hand was ready to relieve the mother in bathing the high full brow and flaxen locks of the darling sufferer. How many silent prayers went up to Heaven is known only to the Hearer of prayer. But there was one full heart there which in all its bursting anguish could not pray. The mother asked not her child's life; she was resigned if God would but speedily take him to rest. But to see him suffer,— the lamb of her bosom, on whom she had feared to let the wind too roughly breathe, for whose aching head no pillow but her breast was ever soft enough; — to see him lie in agony, not knowing her, and afraid of all around him; to know that he might lie thus for long weeks ere the fever reached his vitals; — this was more than she could bear, and her faith faltered.

"He is dead, trouble not the Master," was written as in flame before her whenever she knelt to ask for his life. But the cup which her Father was holding to her lips she could not drink with patience till she had passed through fiery temptations. But the grace of God prevailed; and, after agonizing days and nights, she, who would gladly have borne the pain herself, submitted to the chastening rod, and gave up her darling into His hands. Soon a sweet serenity sat on that little face, so long distorted with pain. The conflict was over. The Christian mother had passed through the floods, but they had not been suffered to overwhelm her. The Saviour was not wounded in the house of His friends.

All hope for Charlie's life was gone. He was given to Christ a willing sacrifice; and peace reigned in that blessed Christian family.

It was in this state of things that Isabel arrived. As every hand was employed, and every heart full, she was consigned to her sister's care.

O, how delightful were the first hours of meeting to the warm-hearted Virginia! Again would she have the joy of sleeping in her sister's arms. The strong little heart, which had borne up so bravely against sorrow, could not calmly bear her joy, and bursts of tears helped to unburden it of its blessed weight. They knelt, as of old, beside one bed, and prayed; then, folded in each other's arms, lay down to rest.

"Sister," said Virginia, "I love you more to-night

than ever before; and I almost fear to take my arms from around you, lest I should lose you. Let us not part for one hour till Papa comes home! Only one year more! How soon the last year slipped away!"

Isabel returned the fond embrace.

"You will promise, won't you, sister?" asked Virginia. "You will be so happy here; you have no idea how good and lovely they all are. Not one harsh word or cold look have they given me in a long year, —just think, when I say and do so many foolish things! The whole family are the most cheerful and happy persons I ever met."

"They are also very religious, are they not?" asked Isabel.

"O, very! Everything seems to be connected in some way with religion; that is, it is so with uncle and aunt and cousin Jane, the real, true Christians," said Virginia. "And even the others, who are not members of the church, seem very good and lovely. Anna and Sam are quite different from Jane,—much more lively; but both of them *say* they want to be Christians."

"Why don't they become such, then?" asked the elder sister.

"I don't know," said Virginia; "but it is not from the feelings which made *me* dislike religion when I was a child. When our dear mother used to talk of holy things she always wept; so when she read her Bible, and came from meeting. She seemed less happy in her religious duties than when she had com-

pany, or was very busy. I remember, when quite small, hoping to be a Christian before death, but dreading religion just then because it was so gloomy. What can be the cause of the difference here? Aunty is never so cheerful as when they talk or read of Christ; and religion does not seem to interfere with their daily duties, but is like a part of their life. I used to think all Christians were like Ma, and all worldly people as buoyant and happy as Aunt Jessie."

A light tap was heard at the door, and Mrs. Vail entered, in her wrapping-gown. She had left Anna with Charlie, and lain down in a little room opening from theirs to rest; but, hearing the conversation between her nieces, could not sleep.

"Dear children," she said, seating herself on their bed, "I do not wonder that you and others are surprised at many things you see in professing Christians. But what Virginia noticed in her dear mother was her frailty rather than her sin. We were naturally of very different temperaments. When we were children, I would roam the fields, jump the rope, and dress dolls, while sister sat quietly assisting our mother, or poring over some grave book alone in her room. Our parents rejoiced to see her so dead to the world, and encouraged much in her which it would have been their wisdom to check. She had so deep and constant a sense of her unworthiness that she hardly dared to look to Christ — the very thing she needed most to do — to give her peace and gladness. She felt that

she was a great sinner, but did not remember, as she should, that Christ was a great Saviour; and thus, not taking him fully at his word,—'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest,'—darkness brooded over her mind and clouded her hopes. While in this very tender state she was forced to leave home, and was thrown into society where the Saviour had no place. At first she was harshly treated, and her heart almost broken. Then, in your father's family, although caressed and loved, she was equally shut out from all help in the divine life. Our parents, after her marriage, often bitterly upbraided themselves for sending her out so young to act for herself; and nothing but the limited support which the church at N—— allowed their pastor could have reconciled them to her exile. Her own hopes became brighter after this; but her anxieties for her husband and children lay like a burden on her heart. This was why *she* was sad. Never attribute the gloom you may see in a Christian to the religion of Christ. Few have the palliations your mother had. As a general rule, when you see a Christian habitually gloomy, you may conclude that he is naturally of a melancholy disposition, or that he has a little, but only a little, religion. There is scarce a more unhappy person in the world than one who has just grace enough to see his own sinfulness, but not enough to live near to Christ, the fountain of purity and peace. If you, dear Isabel, wish to rid yourself of your sadness, live close to Jesus. And if you,

Virginia, wish to increase your happiness, seek Him early while He may be found. But I must hasten to Charlie, for Anna calls me. Good-night, darlings;" and Mrs. Vail bent over the sisters and gave them an *almost mother's kiss.*

Charlie was in a spasm. The whole family gathered round him with tears and fond embraces. The father held him in his arms, while the mother sat kissing him and bathing his cold feet. The cousins and the sisters wept in silence, while Sam was gone for the physician. Faithful Nora wrung her hands, and with an occasional "och! och!" would mutter a half-audible prayer. Then her agony would seem more than she could bear; and, rising, she would fold her hands tightly over her breast, and rapidly walk the floor.

The doctor soon came in with Sam, who exclaimed, as he looked upon his fading brother, "O, how changed since I went out!"

"Is it death?" inquired the father of the young physician.

He was silent; but all knew the sad meaning of his silence.

There was no loud grief, no noise in that chamber of death, to fright the frail spirit. As the family stood around the father, poor Nora first caught sight of the glazing eye, and asked, with an affrighted countenance, "Sure, it is not dying that he is, sir?"

"Yes, Nora," said Mr. Vail, "the poor little lamb you have loved so much, and been so kind to, is going

now; he'll read no more to you, sing no more for you."

Mr. Vail's voice was drowned by the shrieks of the girl, as she threw herself on her knees before the child. "Och! holy Virgin! sure it is not his fault, poor lamby! Och, och! why did n't I leave my place and wander widout a house to me head, before I lived to see this day;—and I that knew this day was coming too! Och, darlin! yees that was an angel here, and can't be an angel in hiven!"

"What do you mean by that, Nora, my good girl?" asked Mrs. Vail, who had been striving in vain to quiet her.

"O, sweet lady, sure it's yees and hisself that ought to suffer for this, and not him, pretty bird! Och!" she cried, wringing her hands, "that those swate eyes should forever be shut up in darkness, and never see Mary, nor her Son, nor the saints!"

"Why do you think he will never see Christ, my good girl?" asked the father.

"Sure yous niver had him baptized nor made into a Christian,—so he'll be shut up in darkness forever. O, but yees were cruel to the poor swate lamb. O, why did n't I do as Mrs. McCorkle bid me, and take him to Father O'Keefe unknownst to yees? O, she's the knowing crater; and only that he was big enough to till on me, I'd had him baptized long ago, and saved his soul."

"His soul is safe, Nora," said the mother, and with a placid face she seized this solemn opportunity

to hold up the only way of life before the bigoted girl, the sceptical young man, and the wavering Isabel. Her beautiful confidence in the Redeemer, her resignation to His will in the trying hour, threw the light of heaven over the otherwise gloomy room.

Christians may engage in controversy with unbelievers, fortifying their ground by the opinions of the great and wise; they may explain and argue and entreat; but this the opponent can stand, for he can do the same. But when one who never felt the sustaining grace of God sees a Christian bear up, not only submissively but joyfully, under His chastening hand, — when he sees him taking God at his word, in the calm and certain belief that all things are working together for his good,— then he *feels* the truth of the religion which his words deny. More can be accomplished by bearing patiently the yoke of Christ than by speaking with the tongues of angels.

Charlie turned slowly round, and, in his own soft tone, asked for drink. Mrs. Vail put the cup to his pale lips, and said, "Do you know me, Charlie?"

"O yes, Mamma, but I'm so tired I must go to sleep. Good-night, Papa, Mamma;" and, raising his soft eyes upward, he added, with a smile, "Yes; in a moment."

"What do you say, my love?" asked the father, who still held the dying boy in his arms. Charlie gave him no answer, but again repeated, looking up with clasped hands, "I'm coming in a moment — just as soon as I kiss them all; — when I say 'Good-by'

I'll come. Good-by, sweet Mamma,—good-by, Pa, —good-by, Sister Jane—"

"Kiss him, dear children," said Mr. Vail, as the little arms were stretched out;—"quietly, for this is the house of God and the gate of heaven."

Every lip was kissed, and every neck encircled by his arms. "Now, good-night!"—and he was gone.

To whom was he speaking as he gazed upward? Who shall say that angel messengers were not there, and visible to his passing spirit?

There was no loud grief in the chamber of death. The little form was laid in his crib and covered. All then knelt,—even Richard, who was not wont to bow before his Maker,—and, in the low tone of anguish, Mr. Vail called upon Him who had wounded, to heal their broken hearts. He thanked God, that, while many wretched parents wept over their ruined children, they were permitted to sorrow not without hope; for the lost was now an angel in heaven. O, how the father plead with the Redeemer, that this bereavement might be sanctified to those who were out of Christ,—to all present; not one was forgotten.

The young physician, rising from his knees, stooped over the crib and impressed a kiss on the lovely face, with the inward thought that there must, after all, be a home for the spirit which had just fled,—that there must be a sustaining power of which he was ignorant.

CHAPTER XIV.

> A creature of amphibious nature,—
> On land a beast, a fish in water;
> That always preys on grace or sin,
> A sheep without, a wolf within.
>
> BUTLER.

> Before her face her handkerchief she spread,
> To hide the floods of tears she did not shed.
>
> POPE.

"THERE 's a poor body in the kitchen would like to be a-spaking to you, Miss," said Nora to Isabel, the morning after Charlie's death.

"What can she want with *me*, Nora?"

"O, sure, she 's always wanting something of my misthress, and, as she 's so throubled now about the poor darlint,—rest his soul!—she must throuble somebody else. She 's had great sorrow on the land and sea; but she 's got a stiff heart yit, has Mrs. McCorkle."

"Tell Virginia to see her, my good girl; she wants her, no doubt, as she could not tell her trouble to a stranger."

"Could n't she, then, dear!" asked Nora, with a smile of contempt; "let Mrs. McCorkle alone for

that. If herself starves at last, it 'll not be because she did n't ask bread,—fait it wont!"

Virginia was sent to Mrs. McCorkle by Isabel, who was in no mood to form new acquaintances. She soon, however, returned, saying, in a low voice, to Isabel, "You alone will answer. She says I 'm so innocent and happy she has n't the heart to take the shine off my face with her troubles; but, I suspect, she thinks I 've heard too much of her blarney, and prefers new game. Don't give her much, sister, if she has come for charity; for she is strong and has plenty of work,—she cannot be needy."

Isabel entered the kitchen, from which she heard cheerful tones proceeding; but, no sooner had Mrs. McCorkle caught a glimpse of her in the passage than the clean checked apron was raised to her eyes, and she began rocking to and fro, the picture of despair. Isabel was all unused to such characters, and her feelings were moved. She took a seat near the heart-broken widow. Mrs. McCorkle rose, and, making a low curtsey, kissed Isabel's hand, and dropped on it tears which were as mechanically shed as the water from a *jet d'eau*.

"My poor woman!" Isabel began. But Mrs. McCorkle whispered, "Sure, dear, I could n't bear to have my sorrow spoke of before the likes of her," pointing to Nora, who, all untouched, was scouring a tin pan with great zeal.

"You may come up to my room, my poor woman," said Isabel, in a compassionate tone. As she led the

way, the widow turned round and smiled and nodded to Nora, as much as to say, "I 've managed the whole of them this time!"

Isabel closed the door, and said, "I am sorry you could not see my aunt, but I think that in a few days she will be able to attend to all her duties again."

"'Dade thin, dear, I'm not sorry; for it 's yourself I been wanting to see. Misthress Vail is a lady indeed, but I 've throubled her a great deal with my sorrow the last while, and I could n't expect her to care for the likes of me, as don't belong to her religion. Och, but I 've been dealt hard wid for my religion!"

"That would make no difference with my aunt, I am sure," said Isabel; "but what did you want, if you had seen her?"

"Sure, dear, it 's a son I 've got, that lies so heavy on my heart. He drove my own cow to the market to sell her, and get one as would give more milk, and don't you believe *they tuk him up for it!*"

"*What* did they do to him?" asked Isabel.

"Tuk him up, dear, them rascals as wears a sign on their hats, and shut him up in the House o' Corriction,— him as I was so tinder of all his life, and his father killed too on the ould rail-road;" — and Mrs. McCorkle burst into a flood of voluntary tears.

"Could not some of your neighbors testify to his good intentions and honesty?"

"Sure they could; but, instead of that, when he sint for two ould milk-men as had knew him since he

landed, and seen him every day, did n't they say they knowed nothing aboot his honesty, and that they would n't be bonds for him, and he had worked for them both as long as they wanted him?"

"Why were they so inhuman?" asked the simple-hearted girl.

"O, there 's a reason for it, dear, as would n't be right for me to tell here in his riverence's own house. I suppose you 'd think it was ungrateful in me," she added, in a whisper, "after the bits of food I 've got here."

"I 'm sure it would n't be anything against my aunt, for she is good and kind to every one. But what can I do for you in your trouble, my good woman?"

"Well, dear, you see I'm thrying to git Jim out of the House o' Corriction; and all the sin the poor lad is guilty of is that he *was born a thrue Catholic*, and could n't change to please anybody,—not if they 'd make him prisident. If he 'd a turned Protestant they 'd niver put him in there,—och! och! Now, dear heart, I wint last night to Father O'Keefe for a little consolation, and the holy man says to me, 'Would n't the clergyman near you hilp you to raise the fine and buy him out?' I tould his riverence, 'Dade they would not for a popish, as they calls us; and thin his riverence says, 'Has the swate lady come yet from the convent?' and I tould him I did n't know. He said you was here, for he 'd had two letters from the holy lady about you, for she loved you

like her own heart, and wished him, if he could, to see after your soul while you was here. He bid me git a word of you, and till my story to you, and maybe you 'd give me a little towards paying the fine; for he said you was as kind as an angel, and as good, too."

"Indeed, I am not," said Isabel, coloring, "but I will gladly help you to get your poor boy back," and she drew her purse from her pocket. "I think, however, you are very much mistaken in thinking it was on account of your religion that you are neglected. This is a free country, and all sects stand on a level here."

"Yis, dear, that 's what they *say*; but your swate heart would break to hear all the abuse we gits here for our religion;" and, stimulated by the dangling purse, Mrs. McCorkle poured into Isabel's ear the full story of her wrongs.

Every question has two sides, and the widow forgot the bright side. She did not tell that the comfortable little house was hers as long as she chose to remain in it; nor that a cow had been given her; nor that her wood was all sent her before the last winter set in. This she forgot.

Isabel was surprised at what she heard; but, never having been imposed upon in this style, was credulous enough to believe the whole story. She felt indignant at the manner in which the poor widow had been treated among strangers, and resolved to befriend Mrs. McCorkle, and plead her cause with others. She spoke sympathizingly to the widow, and, as she pressed

her hand at parting, said, "Would not your priest aid you in raising this sum, as he knows you so well, and will feel none of that miserable prejudice which you find among Protestants?"

"Och, 'dade he would,—he'd pay the whole of it for me,—but himself knows better nor myself does what poverty means. My counthry folk round here are starving poor, and they jist lives on him, and he nothing to live on himself. And och, och! that 's not the worst of it, dear; these people hunts his riverence like a tiger;—'dade, he could hardly git a fut o' land to build his church on, that bad do they hate us all."

"Is he building a new church?" asked Isabel.

"Yes, dear, a darlint of a church,—all stone, no mean bit of a wooden thing, like a carpenter's shop, would he offer to the holy Mother;" and Mrs. McCorkle bowed her head reverently, and crossed herself.

"But where did he get his funds?" asked Isabel, who had not forgotten the poverty of Father O'Keefe and his flock.

The widow recollected herself, and replied, "O, dear heart, these holy men has ways o' their own to build churches. Sometimes it comes by miracles. A priest who lived convanient to me at home dthreamed one night that money was buried in an ould abbey eno' to half build a church, and he was bid to command the people to raise the rest, and to build himself a house for dthreaming it,—and so they did."

Isabel smiled at Mrs. McCorkle's superstition, but

knew not the truth of her assertion, that much of the money which is invested in popish churches in our country is indeed raised by *miracle.*

Many the hard-earned dollar which should be spent to brighten a miserable home,—many the dollar begged for bread or fuel,—pays for the holy stones not harder than the hearts of those who thus grind the faces of the poor. Yes, often is the money, which tears and apparent distress have drawn from those who gave to help a needy fellow-creature, given to appease the cravings of a threatening priest. Well may the benevolent look to it, and devise ways for aiding the helpless strangers, which shall not expose them as prey to the spoiler.

As soon as Isabel felt that it would be proper, she mentioned Mrs. McCorkle's hard case to her aunt. Mr. Vail was absent, but the rest of the family were assembled in the parlor. Isabel commented, with some warmth, upon the cruelty of those who, although they knew the poor widow's son to be dutiful and honest, refused to testify in his favor.

Mrs. Vail smiled, and asked, "How much money did you give her, my love, toward the fine?"

"A half-eagle, only," she replied, "and she is in a state of almost starvation."

Sam laughed outright at his cousin's credulity, assuring her that he had seen Jim, in disguise, chopping wood at his mother's door.

"That cannot be, for she assured me he was in the House of Correction."

"Well, we shall hear in a few days; for, the first quarrel they have, Jim will come himself to expose his mother," said Mrs. Vail. "If Sam is right, Jim has no doubt escaped from confinement; but his mother must have had a hand in it."

Isabel could not believe that any person could be so lost to all virtue as to make up such a tale of suffering. Mrs. Vail called Nora into the sitting-room, and said to her, "Do you know how Mrs. McCorkle gets on now? Is she in want of anything?"

"Dear ma'am, she is n't. The other day she tould me she had four studdy places to wash in every week at half a dollar, and no rint, and no wood to buy. She says the Yankee ladies is bountiful good to her. 'Dade she 's well off, and it 's aisy for the likes o' her to scould me, as has a poor, sick sister to help,—aisy for her to scould me for only giving one dollar for the new church, when herself put down tin dollars. His riverence may well be plased wid her, for—"

"Well, I 'm glad she is not in want; you may go now, Nora. Now, my dear child," she continued, turning to Isabel, "you may see how much reliance can be placed upon this woman's word. Nora has lived with me three years, and I have full confidence in her integrity;—she is ignorant, but conscientious. She stands in great dread of the priest, but I believe she fears God more. Her word is the same to me as that of my own children. You see that Mrs. McCorkle has been boasting to Nora of her prosperity, and blaming her for not giving to Father O'Keefe the

money for which her poor family in Ireland are anxiously looking. She knew you had been to a convent, did she not?"

Isabel repeated, with much simplicity, all her visitor had said of Father O'Keefe's interest in her.

"Ah! it is as your uncle feared, my dear Isabel; they have spread a net for your feet, but God can keep you from their devices. But we will talk of this again. Let us have a pleasanter theme this evening."

A strange voice was just then heard in the kitchen, and Nora, with upraised hands, and eyes full of wonder, put her head in at the door, and said, "There 's a man here wants a word wid you, Masther Sam, if you plase."

"That is Jim, my old friend," said Sam, springing to his feet; and he was not deceived.

"Whist! young gintleman," said Jim, as Sam, in no low tone, saluted him; "whist, will ye, for the ould ooman may be eve' noo at the door. I 'm goin to sea, Sam,—'deed I am; a ship sails to-morrow, and I 'm goin to walk into town to-night."

"What are you going to sea for, Jim?"

"To be throwned, for all I know," he replied. "I 'm most a grown man noo, Masther Sam, and I cannot be bate about the ears like an urchin any longer."

"But your mother said yesterday that you were still in the House of Correction," said Sam, softly opening the sitting-room door, for the benefit of the rest of the family.

"Och, and have n't I been wid her, hid o'days and

loose o' nights, iver since ye called afther me in the woods. I run away from jail becase I saw the doors all left open and a suit of men's clothes dropped in my room. Sure, somebody as had the power was bid to let me go. You 'd a thought she 'd hugged the sowl out o' me when I first got home. But she did all her lovin' up at once, and now she calls me a State's Prison bird, and a convict, and threatens to bethray me, — and how can I stand the like o' that? I rather live at pace and take dacent care of her, if I could; but ye know nothing aboot it. When I sowld the butter and eggs last winter, was n't it becase she tuck the whole eleven dollars I earned chopping down trees for the 'Squire? She would n't give the price of a pair of shoes out o' it, but begged the ould shoes o' them as was n't my betthers; and where my money wint I guessed, but niver knew. Sure we didn't eat it, nor drink it, nor wear it. Last night she tould me to go over the field till the nixt town, and stay in Father O'Keefe's cellar till I sawed and splut all his winter wood. 'Wud he pay me?' I asked. 'He 's paid you already,' says she. ''Deed he has not,' says I, 'and I won't go a fut till I know if he 'll give me the money in my hand.' Then she threatened to go for a magisthrate as soon as it was light. She scoulded herself into her bed, and I jist slipped into the woods wid this bit o' bundle, and there I staid till now without a crust to eat. Fait, then, I 'd rather live wid the bears than with her. But I 'm off now, and she may turn into tears for all I cares for her. I come

here to-night to till you I 'm sorry I ever bodered your father so much," and the poor wayward son wiped his eyes with his sleeve. "I could n't go till I 'd thankt yees all for your kind words to me; and I wanted to give you my jacknife, if you 'll take it, Masther Sam."

Sam was a brave boy, and did not often shed tears; but, with all his failings, Jim had been a great favorite with him. He could not stand the poor fellow's tears, and he turned his head, and wiped his eyes too. "I always told the folks," said Sam, "that you was better than your mother."

"'Deed there 's no telling but I might have been as good as my neighbors. But my head 's bate till it 's soft," said Jim, putting both hands on it, as if to save it a fresh blow. "Och, Masther Sam, jewel, the ould woman has sint to Ireland for her son (but he 's not my father's son), Barney Quigley. O, but he 's the rascallion, and whin the farmers sees him a while they 'll call me a *gintleman*. He 'll not only eat the eggs, but the hins too; and, whin he stales a ride, it 'll be the horse he stales. O, but, dear Masther Sam, he 's the very broth of a villain. But whist, I was jist forgittin' the half o' my errand. The ould woman got five dollars from the nun wid yees for the church, and she 's comin' for five more. I thought I 'd jist let ye know where it wint till."

Jim thrust his jacknife into Sam's hand and was running off, when the noble boy held him back. He stepped out, closed the door, and placed in Jim's hand

his only dollar,—a silver one he had carried for weeks in his pocket;—and Jim was off for parts unknown.

When Sam returned to the sitting-room, the ladies were gazing at each other in mute astonishment. But when Anna saw his face, the whole deception came before her mind in such a ludicrous light that she burst into a loud laugh. "Poor Papa!" she said; "he has really been giving a good deal to the new cathedral!"

"My daughter," said Mrs. Vail, "all we have given this woman has gone from the purest motive. If she has deceived us, the guilt is hers. I trust that dear Isabel is now satisfied as to her veracity. Let us hear no more of this affair,—unless we can do some good to the poor woman's soul."

"I'm amazed!" exclaimed Isabel. "I know not what to believe, or whom to trust. When I was a child I had no doubts upon the subject of religion, and thought I should adhere till death to my mother's faith."

"Because it was the belief of your *mother*, I fear, my love, and not because it accorded with God's word. Was not this the case?" interrupted Mrs. Vail.

"I suppose so," replied her niece, "for I never thought it possible she could err in judgment. My beloved Leonore shook my confidence in my early religious belief, but planted none firmly in its place. Indeed, I often used to think that, after all her ceremonies, her *real dependence* for salvation was the

same as my mother's. I strove to be a Catholic,—one like her,— but when she was gone, I found, to my sorrow, that there was but one Leonore there. Every one in the convent was anxious that I should become a Catholic and a Sister of Charity; but she seemed to desire more earnestly to save me from what she termed the heresy of Protestantism. She loved my soul."

"May I ask, love, where you are now?" said Mrs. Vail, anxiously watching the expression of Isabel's face.

"All adrift," was her only answer.

"And no fear of shipwreck, my darling cousin?" asked Jane.

Isabel drew from her breast what had remained there unknown to the rest until now — the jewelled cross of Leonore. Holding it up, she said, "I hate hypocrisy, and tremble while I wear this emblem of another faith; and yet I earnestly desire to comply with that dear girl's dying request that I should wear it."

"Was it her request?" asked Mrs. Vail.

"Yes; and that I should fill her place as a teacher, which is now vacant, or miserably filled," answered Isabel.

"If, then, you are bound by one request, of course you are by the other. Could you, with a good conscience, become a nun?"

"Not as I now feel. But I must resolve: — there is a right way,— and I *must* find it." And Isabel

repeated all the sweet and touching incidents connected with the peaceful death of her friend.

"And when was it she bound you to wear the cross?" asked Mrs. Vail.

"She never spoke of it to me; but to the Lady Superior, who told me of it just before I left."

"My dear Isabel, I do not believe that if this subject had lain so near Leonore's dying heart she could have kept silence when you were so much with her. And, even if her own lips had uttered the request in your ear, you surely would not feel bound to sacrifice your immortal interests to fulfil it. Good and lovely I doubt not she was; but might she not err? But tell me, Isabel, is the leaning that way? are you half inclined to become a Roman Catholic?"

"I should have become one when she died, *could I have done so;* but there was a something holding me back,—a conviction of the truth of my mother's instructions; and yet I am no better for them."

"My love, the little seed sown by your mother's hand and watered by her tears is still in your heart. That *something* which you say has held you back is, doubtless, the influence of her training, which will yet, with God's blessing, lead you aright. But I would no more urge you to adopt a belief because your mother held it, than because Leonore did. Search for yourself, and pray God to open your eyes to find the way of life. But I trust that you and sister and cousins will not put off too late an attention to this all-important matter. In the mean time I advise you,

dear Isabel, to lay by the cross in your desk; not that I have any superstitious fear of it, but because I wish you to be free from any restraint under which the sight of it might lay you."

"Dear aunt," said the weeping girl, "I know not where to look, or which way to go. I am bewildered by doubt, and by the trials through which I have passed the last year."

Having promised her assistance in the search after truth, her aunt asked whether she felt confidence in her own ability to arrive at correct conclusions.

"No, my dear aunt, I feel confidence in no one, least of all in myself," replied Isabel.

"Then, my love," said Mrs. Vail, "you are just in the frame of mind to seek for truth. The first step must ever be to yield our own pride of opinion, and go humbly to Christ, in the spirit of a little child; for he has promised to teach the meek his way."

CHAPTER XV.

> *Thus, this is thinking free,*— a thought that grasps
> Beyond a grain, and looks beyond an hour.
>
> YOUNG.

THE night was dark, chill and stormy. The young physician, wearied with the day's duties and dejected by the scenes through which he had passed, entered his father's dwelling, now silent as the tomb. He sought his chamber, hoping for the oblivion which had been wont there to come at his bidding; but he found it not. The storm howled without, but a fiercer one raged in the breast of the young man. From his earliest years he had been taught that a strict morality would insure him a seat in heaven. He had, therefore, looked on those who cast off all hope in the deeds of the law, and trust alone in the atonement of our Redeemer, as fanatics. Their earnest zeal and expressions of joy had often been the subject of ridicule in his presence; and, if he joined not in the derision, it was not that he despised them less, but because the beloved of his heart was named among the despised Nazarenes. Earthly love closed the lips which enmity of heart would fain have opened. He was not ignorant on this great subject; for he had seen religion

and irreligion in all their forms, and in their effects on individuals and society. He had seen France without the religion of the Bible, and our own and other happy lands with it; but still the proud heart refused to yield to its judgment on the side of right.

This night he had been behind the scene; he had witnessed more of the sustaining power of grace than ever before, and had returned home amazed at its strength.

Who like the physician is admitted into the soul's secrets in its hour of deepest anguish? Ay, and who like him could administer the balm of Gilead to the wounded spirit, or apply the probe of truth to the heart festering with its as yet unconscious sin?

He gains admittance where no messenger of the cross can go without intrusion: where even a mother dare not speak, he may freely do so, to the sick and dying; for he reigns supreme in the sick room.

Our young physician had seen bereavement borne with stern heart by the philosopher, in dogged silence by the disappointed misanthrope, and with a degree of submission by many who acknowledged God's hand in affliction; but this was the first time he had ever witnessed frail woman *rejoicing* in tribulation. Charley was the joy of their hearts, the light of that happy household; and yet he had seen the father, mother, and one loving sister, resign him cheerfully to God.

Would an earthly friend receive from us a gift amid our *bitter regrets* at parting with our treasure? Should we say, as we held out to him our gift, "Why

are we the ones to make this great sacrifice ? — why are we the only ones to be stripped of such a cherished treasure ? — why not our neighbor, who has more, or who loves them less ?" Our friend would be indignant at the indelicacy of our course, and scorn our offering.

It is one thing to give a child to God, but quite another to have it torn from us to accomplish some wise design; and yet how many who profess to be laying up their treasures in heaven give thus grudgingly their children to God! Thus are not only their own souls robbed of the blessed fruits of affliction, but the Redeemer is wounded in the house of his friends.

"Whence the difference ?" thought the young man, as sleepless he paced his room. "How could Jane, so tenderly bound up in her little brother, and with naturally far less self-control than Anna, bear so calmly what seemed to rend the breast of her sister ?" He thought of the angelic sweetness of her face as she kissed the faded lips and said to her father, "I love him too well to wish him here again. O, my sweet Charley, I am glad you are there!" Ay, and he remembered, too, the almost indignant look of Anna when she asked, "Why must our darling be torn from us, and children be spared to those who care little for them, and have not the power to make them comfortable ?"

The voice of God was speaking in the young man's heart, and he was striving to turn a deaf ear to it. But frail indeed is man when he attempts to strive

with his Maker. "*There is no God, no hereafter, I will not believe!*" escaped the pale lips, but they spoke not the word of the heart. Memory answered him, ere the words died away, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." "*Believe*, and thou shalt be saved."

The gray light of morning was shining on his undisturbed pillow. Weary with the strife within, he sank into a chair, saying, "If I am ever forced to believe these doctrines I hate, I will conceal it in my own breast."

But "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," and he little knew that the "hereafter" was so near at hand, which should reveal the needs-be of the stroke that had fallen upon the pastor's family. He then made a covenant with himself that he would never yield his opinion on these subjects,— that he would never have the man Jesus to rule over him. And he rose and went his way, trying to persuade himself that the thoughts of the night were but the fantasies arising from an overwearied mind and body.

A few days after Charley's funeral, the physician called at Mr. Vail's, and found the family seated to the examination of some subject which seemed greatly to interest them. The parents felt deeply touched at the sympathy he had manifested in their sorrow. They could never forget his son-like conduct at a time when, of all, the heart is most alive to kindness. He received a welcome, and the books were closed. To this he objected, saying, "Unless you admit another

scholar into your class, sir, I must retire as an intruder."

"We will gladly admit you, my dear young friend," said the minister; "our search is for *truth*, and it concerns you as much as us. There may, however, be much said which will conflict with your sentiments. Of course you will not expect us to conceal our views from motives of false politeness."

"You know me too well to ask that question, sir; I shall gladly listen."

The father then said that the Bible was agreed on by all the family as an infallible standard, and that by it the doctrines professed by them were to be tried, one by one.

"Do not all your young people believe those doctrines?" asked the young man.

"Isabel has doubts on some points," said Mr. Vail; "Anna is a believer because she says she never thought of doubting; and Virginia considers herself a firm believer in evangelical doctrines because her dear mother held them. Isabel differs from the others only in this, that her faith in these doctrines has been shaken. Were they situated as she has been, they also would doubt. A good creed, without an intelligent conviction of its truth, affords but a poor protection against the assaults of error and scepticism.

"Although I believe none of our children have a doubt of Christ's divine nature, I shall glance this evening at some proofs of that glorious doctrine."

"Sir," said the young physician, "if you can

prove *that* doctrine, you will have gained over one of your pupils, at least. Could I receive that, I should have no other difficulties with orthodoxy."

"Ah, my dear young friend," said Mr. Vail, "there is one doctrine still harder to receive,—one, more humbling to our pride."

"Pray, what is that, sir?"

"That which asserts the depravity of human nature. When that is believed, the heart is prepared to receive the other doctrine. The soul awakened to a sense of its moral defilement and ruin welcomes Christ as a divine Redeemer. It bears witness to the Scripture, that He is God. The humbling doctrine of depravity you do not believe;" and the pastor cast a look full of love and interest upon his friend.

Richard returned no answer, but his mind reverted to his chamber, where night after night the sins of his youth and manhood had risen up before his view. He remembered the excuses he had made for every wrong step, and the almost vow he had taken never again to listen to a word on religious subjects.

"Go on, sir," he said; "I am but one listener, and must not encroach too much upon your time."

Mr. Vail proceeded with his subject, and the young man while listening ran his eyes around the table. There was Anna, evidently striving to give respectful attention to a subject in which she felt little interest. Isabel, with an anxious expression, gave her whole mind to the words of her uncle. But Jane, with her sweet face, so placid and full of hope and

joy; — he was forced to love her more than ever, and, as he gazed on her, the wish rose in his heart that he, too, might possess the same principle of happiness with her.

At the end of an hour the books were taken away, and the rest of the evening was spent in general conversation. When Richard rose to go, Mr. Vail followed him to the door, saying, as he gave the parting hand, "God bless you, my dear young friend!" This blessing was still in the mind of Richard when he entered his home. The short prayer thus breathed forth from the pastor's heart had reached heaven, and was destined to bring back an answer of peace.

CHAPTER XVI.

IDA.
Why do you call me cousin?

ULRIC.
Are we not so?

IDA.
Yes, but I do not like the name; methinks
It sounds so cold, as if you thought upon
Our pedigree, and only weighed our blood.

BYRON.

THREE months had passed away most peacefully with Isabel at Brookside. Her relatives were every day becoming dearer to her susceptible heart, and the holy principles which governed them were quietly exerting their influence over her own spirit. The leaves were beginning to fall, reminding her of Leonore, who had faded with them in the last sad autumn. Most of her wardrobe was at the convent, as were also all her books; and yet her aunt had made no allusion to her return thither. Isabel resolved to speak on the subject, although quite undecided as to her future course.

The thought of a separation from her sister, and of the loss of home enjoyments at the parsonage, was

painful to her, and at times she would resolve to remain at Brookside, where with her cousins she could have better advantages than at the convent. Then her proud spirit would remember the sarcastic look of the Lady Superior, when she said, at parting, "I know you will never return to such an evil place as this." What she most dreaded there, however, was a renewal of the conflict she had undergone with regard to her religion. She had never been persuaded to discard the Bible as the only infallible source of truth, and since she came to the parsonage she had made it her daily companion, and by it tried the tenets which had been offered her in lieu of her own. Her doubts had all been dispelled, and her troubled mind had found rest by simple reliance upon the declarations of Holy Writ.

While she was in this state of mind, her uncle came in one day, with an open letter in his hand, saying, "As cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."

"A letter from my dear father?" said Isabel, springing toward Mr. Vail, while tears ran down her cheeks.

"Sister," said Virginia, "you always cry, whether come weal or woe; 't is all the same: uncle said '*good* news.'"

With a flushed cheek, Isabel ran over the letter, and then asked for the one it enclosed for herself.

"My dear Isabel," said her aunt, "now that you know your father is well and happy, I have a request to

make before you read your own letter; it is that you will read one which your father wrote concerning you some months since, and which I have not thought proper to show you before."

"Anything from my beloved father,—it will be new to me," said Isabel, holding out her hand for her treasures.

Mrs. Vail gave her the letter from her desk, which she read with changing color. She closed it without speaking, and opened the last. It was filled with the tenderest outgushings of a father's heart toward his motherless children. He gave an account of his travels since last he wrote, mentioning the names of many famous places he had visited in southern Europe; but said, "Nature has indeed done wonders for this glorious region; it is like one long paradise, and is full of interesting historical associations, but the longer I am here the more earnestly do I pant for my own dear native land. A poor simple man once went from his quiet hamlet to a large city, where he saw much wickedness. When asked his opinion of the place, he answered, 'I thought there was no God there.' Now, did I not know that the wise Governor of the universe often allows his creatures to act out the passions of their nature, to show what is in man, I too might think there was no God in Italy, France, or Spain. My heart is made sick by what I see and hear of the spiritual despotism exercised over the people. No man, whether native or foreigner, who dissents from the established faith, can

worship God as his conscience directs. I have always had a small opinion of their faith; but never till I left home did I see its full workings. Surely it must be a false religion which needs such props as this resorts to. The spirit which rebuked Peter's impetuous zeal with, 'Put up thy sword into its sheath,' has no dwelling here; — it is the cross or the cell, the mass or the garotte. The more I have seen of that church, which must, from motives of policy, be veiled for a time in America, the more have I reproached myself for allowing dear Aunt Jessie to send you to the convent, and the more anxious have I been that you should be under the influence of your affectionate and accomplished aunt in Brookside. All that I said concerning your property, in a letter to your aunt, is cheerfully withdrawn. Should you decide upon the life of a nun, your property shall still be yours for *your own use.* Withholding it would, I now see, savor too much of persecution. I felt nervous and anxious when ill, lest you might be induced to take the foolish step. But reflection shows me that I have done my precious child injustice, and that filial duty and your own good sense will guide you aright. Your mother's religion, I assure you, shines brightly in contrast with all others.

"As to my health, it is greatly improved. The physicians say I can never be well again, but that with great care and good nursing I may live for many years. So you see, beloved children, I shall bring home work for you both to do. Strive to improve all your advan-

tages to the utmost till my return, for it does not seem to me that I could ever spare you from home again for a day. Herbert has been a son to me,—has read to me, cheered me, nursed me, and laid me under such obligations as I can never repay." ———

"That was all you got at the post-office, was it, my son?"

"All there was for you, sir," answered Sam, blushing a little.

"Have you one for me?" asked Anna, who well knew Sam's love of teasing when he was the bearer of Cupid's missives.

"For me?" asked Jane.

"No, for neither of you," replied the boy. "I have a letter, but it is to be delivered privately, and read in my presence!"

"I know it's not for me," said Virginia, "for Pa wrote all he had to say in Isabel's letter."

"I am going now into the woods," said Sam, "to dig roots for Jane; she's in a hurry to make that 'surrup' for old Mrs. Rose. Do you want to go with me, Virginia? Run and get your clod-hoppers; it is wet in some places!"

So off they started, Virginia carrying the basket, and Sam shouldering the shovel.

"For whom was that letter, Sam?" asked Virginia, imploringly.

"I'm sure you've had enough for one day," said Sam. "Did not your letters make you as happy as you wish to be?"

"Indeed they did,— such good news from my beloved father and dear Herbert."

Sam stopped, and looked in the young girl's face. "Virginia," he said, "I don't think it 's very proper for you to say 'dear Herbert,' when you speak of that fellow!"

"Fellow! Indeed," replied Virginia, rather tartly, "he 's no *fellow*, I can tell you! I could not love a brother better!"

"How does he look?" said Sam. "Is he as brown as the fellow that blacks his boots?"

"Indeed he 's not; he 's as white as you are, and a great deal handsomer!" replied the girl, as she cast on Sam a look of admiration which belied her words. "What makes you so cross," she asked, "when you speak of my cousin? You never saw him; he has never injured you."

"I have an idea he 's proud, and I would like to humble his highness," said Sam. "I wish he belonged to me."

"*Belonged* to you! — how ridiculous! What do you mean?"

"It would be no more ridiculous for one man to belong to *me*, than for forty to belong to *him*."

"So I think, cousin," said the young girl, thoughtfully. "But, now, suppose cousin Herbert did belong to you,— how would you dispose of him?"

"I would present him and his forty subjects to the Colonization Society, and request his settlement as prince over them, in Africa."

"O, Sam!" cried Virginia, with as much distress in her face as if that sentence had gone forth against her cousin, "how can you be so cruel?"

During this conversation Virginia was seated, gathering the leaves of checkerberry, while Sam leaned against a wild cherry-tree, gazing at her.

"Now, look, Sam," she said, "I 've spoiled this beautiful bed of moss by picking all the little green leaves from it, and you have done nothing. Why don't you cut the bark off that tree? 'T will be tea-time soon, and you will try the patience of an angel if you don't get the *yarbs* for Jane. Don't you pity her, Sam, when the doctor calls at the house? It seems too bad they can't be married, when they love each other so!"

Sam had cut the cherry-bark into square pieces. "Now," he said, giving a knife to his cousin, "you can get off those pieces while I look for some *sarsiprella*. You were speaking of Jane," he added; "I had begun to think that Dick was forgetting her, and looking at other bright eyes; but last evening — now, don't you speak of this, for my honor's sake — he asked me to hand a little box to my sister. I thought it was medicine, though the box was square, not like a pill-box. So I thought I 'd see what kind of a mess she 'd got to cure her toothache. I opened it, and, instead of unromantic pills, there, in some pink cotton, lay a pretty little diamond ring. 'O now, Dick,' thought I, 'you 're caught, — you 've sent a ring to cure the toothache, and will give the

pills, with tender words, to the new lady-love!' I looked inside to see if the suspected name was there."

"Whose name was it?" asked Virginia, with curiosity in her eyes.

"Whose do you think?—Nelly Wilson's?"

"No, indeed; I can't imagine. Tell me, Sam."

"Well, inside the ring was engraved—what do you think?—'*Jane, dearer than ever.*'"

"Why, Sam! now that will put her all in a fever again, won't it?"

"No," said Sam, "I think not; but I should not wonder if they were married, after all. *I'd* have a heathen if I loved her!"

"That's because you're not so good as she is."

"Bad as I am," said Sam, smiling, "you'll all miss me when I'm gone to college."

"But you'll come home every month, won't you, cousin? No one will miss you as I shall. No more pleasant rambles for me this fall; no coasting, nor learning to skate, next winter. I believe sister thinks it's unlady-like to take such kind of exercise. She told me the other day to remember that I was sixteen years old!"

"I shall be seventeen next week," exclaimed Sam. "In four years I shall be a man! 'Roll swiftly round ye wheels of time!'"

"That's a *hymn*, Sam; and beside, time flies swiftly enough here, I'm sure. What a sweet short year this has been! But, what are you so anxious to be a man for?"

"I want to be doing something."

"I 'm sure you are doing something every day; besides studying so much."

"Yes, sawing wood, and taking care of the horse, and going errands! Jim McCorkle has more genius for such work than I have. I want to do something that he and such as he can't do. In four years I shall graduate, and then, Virginia, perhaps I shall know as much, and be as much of a gentleman, as 'dear Herbert!'"

"Who said you were not so, now?" asked his cousin.

"How could you expect me to be?" asked Sam, impatiently. "I 've never been out of this village to spend a month, and he constantly travelling, or associating with refined people at home. But I don't believe his mother and sisters are more lady-like than mine are!"

"O fie, Sam! you proud boy! If you 'll promise to pardon him for his superior advantages, I 'll reward you with a compliment. Herbert, with all his wealth and intercourse with the world, does not appear any better than you do. And yet he is a year and a half older than you are."

Sam evidently felt flattered, but was too proud to thank his cousin for the compliment. "Let 's see," he said, "sarsaparilla, checkerberry, cherry-bark,— was that all, Virginia?"

"Yes, three things,—she has the other 'grudgins,' as old Sambo used to say, in the house. What a

capital doctor's wife she would make,— always simmering something for sick people!"

"If she and Dick were in partnership, they could set up two kinds of practice, allopathic and yarbopathic. Come, give me the basket; it is heavier than when we started."

"You cannot carry all, Sam,—basket, hatchet, and spade. I'll carry the hatchet. But, what would Isabel say if she should see me?" exclaimed Virginia.

Sam helped Virginia over the stone-wall of the pasture, and said, "You have forgotten that letter you was so curious about." He then drew it from his pocket, and said, "Now, if you'll promise never to say 'dear Herbert' again, I'll show it to you."

"I'll try to remember," said Virginia; and taking the letter, she read her own name on it. "Why, it is from Herbert, and came in the same mail with father's!"

She opened it, and read aloud a few lines expressive of affection, and of anxiety to see her. It enclosed a heavy one to Isabel, which he said contained a long account of their tour since he wrote last. He expressed great pleasure at the good news he heard of Virginia's happiness with her relations, and concluded by saying that he should surely visit Sam on his return; for, from all he had heard, he would be just the friend for him.

Sam looked somewhat mortified at this manly allusion to himself, and his noble spirit forced him to say,

"Well, after all, he is no doubt a fine fellow, and I 'll give him a hearty welcome when he arrives."

The question of Isabel's remaining at Brookside or returning to the convent, was the subject of consultation at the parsonage. She decided to remain. Mr. Vail, therefore, resolved to accompany her to the convent, and explain to the Lady Superior her reasons for this course, and also settle honorably all her little affairs there. They were received politely, but with less cordiality than Isabel had expected. She chose to leave with the Superior a small amount which she had placed in her hands, and all pecuniary matters were arranged to the lady's satisfaction. She, however, requested Isabel to return the jewelled cross of Leonore, saying that it would, of course, be valueless to her. "Far from it," said Isabel; "I shall consider it one of my dearest treasures, and place it among the keepsakes my mother left me." But the reverend mother was inexorable; and Isabel drew the cross from her bosom, asking, "Did she not bequeath it to me with her *dying lips?*"

"Yes, if you fulfilled her *dying words*," said the lady, tartly; and Isabel gave it into her hands, to the great satisfaction of Mr. Vail, who had feared the influence this little memento of her lovely friend might still have over her mind.

Isabel then requested that she might have an interview with Mary Gray, which was granted. The two friends talked together a few moments only, in the presence of Mr. Vail and the Lady Superior, when

Mary was summoned away to her lessons. She clasped Isabel in her arms, and, kissing her fervently, whispered, "My father was defeated in that election, and I'm going home to my dear mother at the end of the term."

Mr. Vail and Isabel visited many places of interest in and around the city. While her uncle was busy one morning, Isabel went out alone to make some purchases. One of these was a watch for Sam, which Virginia had entreated her to get, as he was soon to go from home, and had refused to take his mother's with him.

After a few weeks' absence they were joyfully received at the parsonage by all who had patience to wait for them there. Sam and Virginia met them at the dépôt with the carriage, and scarcely could the little maiden restrain her expressions of delight before strangers. She had had a lingering fear that the nuns might, after all, persuade her sister to remain at the convent. But her dear Isabel had returned, and her heart was full of joy for the present and hope for the future.

CHAPTER XVII.

"What care I hough a highborn fool
Scoff at me while I toil?
Why rack my brain 'mong musty briefs
A brother's hopes to foil?
No; with an honest heart I'll choose
The path that Adam trod,
And, with a noble purpose, till
The soil, and work for God."

"O, SAM, you darling boy!" said Jane, as she walked in the garden, leaning on his arm. "What shall we all do when you are gone? I have half a dozen errands for you now, and do you know that poor Uncle Fosdick is very sick?"

"Blessed old man!" said the boy. "As I go out into the world to begin life, he seems to be just finishing his humble course. I would be almost willing, sister dear, to give up all my ambitious plans, and lie down upon his lowly bed, to be as sure of heaven as he is. I've often made light of holy things, Jane," said the boy, "and have had the impiety to think that the goodness of those around me would shield me from the anger of Heaven, but I feel to-night almost afraid to go out into temptation with none to guide or watch over me."

"'My Father, be Thou the guide of his youth,'" exclaimed the loving sister, as she raised her tearful eyes. She kissed her brother tenderly, and said, "You must take my seal;— on it is an owl, with the one word, 'WATCH.'. When you look at it, brother, say to yourself, 'Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.' God's hand is a strong hand, Sam, and He will keep those who trust in Him."

"But I don't trust in Him,—I don't even pray to Him; for when I repeat a prayer I feel no nearer to God. The truth is, Jane, I do not love God, nor His people, unless such of them as love me."

"That 's a sad confession, Sam. But 'the Eye that slumbereth not nor sleepeth,' will be watchful over you. You are the child of many prayers. Remember, brother, when you are away, that your sweet mother will pray for you with every breath."

"And my sweet sister, too," said Sam. "But there come Virginia and Isabel."

"What shall we all do for company when you 're gone?" said Jane. "You 'll be lonely, won't you, Virginia dear, without him? But I shall try to fill his place. I will walk with you, talk and read with you, and try to be as young as Sam;—as interesting I can never be."

"I was just thinking," said the princely boy, as he gazed upon them, "that it was as much as a boy like me could do to walk between two such girls without feeling proud. There is no need of compliments;

I can't stand much to-day!"—and a tear stood in his eye.

"Sam," said Virginia, "your mother wishes you to cut the dahlias all off, and bring them to her."

"The truth is," replied the boy, "my heart begins to fail me when I find I am really going away. But I've been a boy long enough; I must try to be a man hereafter."

The cousins all walked towards a rude summer-house, where they seated themselves.

"This is my own work, Virginia," said Sam, looking overhead. "Don't you think I would make a good carpenter?"

"Any sensible man, with strong arms, can make a carpenter," she replied; "but you'll be more than *that*, Sam. What *do* you mean to be when you are a man,—a minister, or lawyer, or doctor?"

"I always, till lately," replied Sam, "had a high ambition for the legal profession. But I have attended two or three justice's courts, as they call them, and have seen what are the first steps of that ladder to fame. I could not be a lawyer's *apprentice*, and run around serving accounts on the poor, who would curse me as soon as my back was turned. I have given that up. A doctor I never meant to be,—I hav n't the nerve for that; nor a minister neither,—I hav n't patience enough for that office, if I had the grace."

"You'll have to be a country gentleman, like my father," said the young girl; "'tis a charming life, Sam, even at the south, and here it must be lovely,

— a paradise. You know you need n't carry your milk or vegetables to market yourself. You could raise fruit and flowers, and ride, and walk, and read, just as you pleased. One man could cultivate your land, attend to your cattle, go to market, and oversee all your affairs."

"I guess he could," said the boy, laughing at his cousin's earnestness; "for I'd *have* no land, nor cattle, nor crops, to take care of. And if I had, Virgie, I would have no man to *oversee* my business. I would not only do that myself, but I would work, and that with a good will and strong arm. I never yet was ashamed to do anything honest. I only felt as if it was a shame for me to waste my time doing work which Jim could do as well as I, and for which such as he should be paid."

"Why, Sam, I always thought you were so proud that you did not like to work," said Virginia.

"Then you were very much mistaken, my little cousin. Summer before last, when Mr. Brooks was planting his nursery, I worked a good many days for him, and earned quite a sum of money, besides keeping up with Jane in my studies. But it will be some time before I have a farm of my own. I shall have to earn money first."

"My father has plenty," said Virginia, with great simplicity; "he'll buy you a farm, I'm sure, he thinks so much of uncle, and of all of you."

"Not of me," replied the boy.

"O, I almost forgot," interrupted Virginia, "I

have a beautiful present for you, Sam. Will you accept it?"

"Yes," said Sam, opening his penknife, and seizing a golden ringlet which hung upon her shoulder; "shall I take it?"

"It is not that," said Virginia, laughing; "you surely would not disfigure me so."

"Well, let me see the present,—'tis not the farm, *paradise*, already, is it?"

"No, Sam," said the young girl, "not such a valuable gift as that; but here it is," and she held out a little box to her cousin.

When Sam saw the contents, his countenance betrayed several different emotions. "Was it really bought for me, Isabel?" he asked, turning to her.

"Yes, Sam, you needed one to help you use time aright, and you were a noble boy not to take your mother's, when she offered it to you," replied his cousin.

"I should very much like such a watch," said the boy, "but I do not think I ought to take this. Next year my father will get me one."

"Not take it, after Isabel has purchased it? Indeed you will, sir," said Virginia, laughing, while she threw the chain around his neck.

"Now," she said, "let us cut the dahlias;" and she drew forth her scissors. "Sam, your mother says that if you cut them, it will make her happy to look at them even after they are withered. How she loves you! I wish I had a mother, Sam."

She looked up, but the boy was apparently unconscious that she was speaking.

"What ails you, Sam,—are you dreaming?" asked Anna.

"Yes," replied the boy, "of realities, stern realities. The fact is, I don't like the idea of being poor; I don't like to be pitied and patronized."

"O, you wicked, proud boy! Who *thought* you were poor?" asked Virginia.

"*We* are the poor ones," said Isabel, "all alone in the world. If I had such a home as this, Sam, I should feel very rich."

"Sister got the watch, cousin, to make you happy," said Virginia; "but instead of that it has made you miserable. You won't let people love you, or be kind to you, Sam; that 's not *noble* pride. You are too *selfish* to receive a kindness. 'T was noble in you to refuse your mother's, but not so to refuse this."

"I thank you, cousin, for the watch, and for your lecture, too; and I promise to think of you all every time the watch ticks."

"I am afraid, then, you 'll not study much. But do let us get the dahlias, Sam," said Virginia. "I hope you will look happy when you go into the house to your mother."

"I feel so *now*," said the boy; "but at first I felt angry that I could not be the giver rather than the receiver of all the favors showered upon me of late."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Come not between the dragon and his wrath.
SHAKSPEARE.

ONE Sabbath morning, not long after Jim's departure, Honora returned from mass, bathed in tears, for which she seemed unwilling to account. All that Mrs. Vail's kindness could draw from her was, "Musha, and it 's that ould Kerry cabooch that 's makin' Father O'Keefe so hard wid me. Och, honey! but the heart of me 's broken intirely! O, but she 's the miserable ould far-downer, is Mrs. McCorkle!"

Mrs. Vail was well convinced that the old woman was at the root of Honora's trouble; so, in the morning, accompanied by Isabel, she went to the little house on the roadside. The ladies were welcomed with apparent joy; for, although in her heart Mrs. McCorkle hated every one of a different faith, she well knew that the ladies of the parsonage never called at the houses of the poor without their purses. This time, however, her joy was wasted, for Mrs. Vail had come upon another errand.

"Mrs. McCorkle, you know," she said, "that I

am deeply interested in all the poor strangers who come among us, and that if any of them are in trouble I am willing to do anything in my power to make them comfortable."

"O, but I'm the one as knows that to the core o' my heart, swate lady," replied the widow, wiping her eyes. "You've been like an angel to me."

"Well, I want you, then, to tell me, if you can, what is troubling my good Nora. She has done nothing but weep and sigh for—"

"Honora, the darlint! Maybe she's throubled about her people at home,—afraid the starvation's come upon them."

"My friend," said Mrs. Vail, calmly, and fixing her eyes on Mrs. McCorkle, "I am aware that you *know* the cause of Nora's trouble, and therefore I hope you will not deceive me, but inform me at once what it is."

The decided manner in which the lady spoke, at first quite *unmanned* Mrs. McCorkle, and she began to weep. But her tears had lost all their effect on Mrs. Vail, and she pressed an answer to her question. Then the tears of deceit were turned to those of anger, and all her admiration for Mrs. Vail, and all her gratitude for her kindness, were as if they had never been. She lost all control over herself; and her tongue, being effectually loosed, ran with astonishing speed, telling all which she constantly declared she would never reveal. "An' suppose I did tell his riverence that she was gittin' to be a red Protestant?

She desarves to be tould on.—the ould turncoat,—she desarves to lose her place, an' be turned out on the world."

"She will not be turned on the world, sick or well, while *I* have a home."

"'Dade she will, then,—the ould bundle! His riverence promised me yesterday that he'd bid her lave you when her week would be up."

"Why do you and he wish her to leave me?" asked the lady, with a gentleness which contrasted strangely with the fury of Mrs. McCorkle.

"Becase, did n't she know when my darlin' boy was inticed away, and niver tould his riverence till he'd look afther him, and forbid him to stir a fut, but stay and work for his poor ould heart-broken mother? The mother's heart is broke in me, all for her, the wretch!"

"Who enticed Jim away?" asked Mrs. Vail.

"Maybe," replied the woman, smiling and curtsey-ing in her anger, "maybe it would be ill manners in me to tell my betthers that her own young gintleman did it, and *that*, afther I had worked my nails off to pay his fine, when I ought to have tuk the law of those rascallions for false imprisonment!"

"My son never spoke with him," said Mrs. Vail, "after he was taken to jail, till one dark night he came over to tell Sam he was going to sea, and to bid him good-by. And as to the fine, Mrs. McCorkle, you know that you *did not pay it;* but that through friends, who should have known better, Jim was

allowed to escape from confinement. You know that the money you received from Miss McIver, you gave to the priest, for the new church. Your whole course, my poor woman, is well known to us, and has caused us great sorrow on your account. You, and the person through whom you did this, could be severely punished by our laws; but it is far from our hearts to injure you. I hope God will forgive you both, and I assure you that we shall do so. I suppose, then, that poor Nora's trouble arose from the dread of leaving her home. But she need not do so; she shall not be forced away."

"'Dade, thin, she will," sharply retorted Mrs. McCorkle; "for this is not the first time she 's had hard words wid his riverence. Pretty work for the child of Catholic parents to be hearin' heretics pray, and read the Bible, night and morning! Fine, indade! He 'll make her fast the very life out of her if she stays wid ye! There 's another," said she, pointing to Isabel; "making two souls ye 've ruined already, drawin' them away from the holy mother church!"

The poor girl was pale with terror, and gladly did she accompany her aunt into the street, after she had said, "Good-morning,"—a farewell which the gentle widow returned from the door, in loud tones of threatening, as they walked away. "I 'll tell his riverence how ye came here to break a poor widdy's heart in her own bit o' house. I 'll tell him, and he 'll be revinged on ye!"

But her threats fell powerless on the lady's ear.

She had not been reared where priests have *all power* on earth; nor did she believe that his "riverence" would be suffered to harm her or her family.

As Mrs. McCorkle saw them slowly departing without giving her one abusive word in reply, she seemed resolved to make them partners of her sin, if possible. She called after them to stop a moment, as she "wanted a word" with them. Mrs. Vail turned, and was retracing her steps, when Mrs. McCorkle asked, "Do ye know what a widdy's curse is? Niver a one but come upon them she prayed it on; — and now, take mine, the curse of a widdy and a sthranger!" and then she looked like triumph itself.

Mrs. Vail said, in a soft voice, "Mrs. McCorkle, my religion teaches me to bless, and curse not; therefore, I wish you every good thing in this life, and I hope that God will pardon your sins, and receive you to heaven."

Mrs. McCorkle was not prepared for this. At first she faltered; but her temper again conquered her sense of shame, and she said, "Good-by, *ladies!* Iverybody 's a lady in this miserable ould counthry,— milliners and tailor-gerls, and ivery body. O, if you could but see an *Irish* lady once, ye would n't know what kind of a thing yees were looking at! *Ladies*, indeed! Hoot!" screeched the widow, after they were almost out of sight, "away wid your gintility! Ye took a false oath, ye young heretic! Ye swore to stay, and give all your fortune to the holy Sisthers, and thin ye ran away like a thief! His

riverence knows all aboot ye, and —" But the ladies were beyond hearing distance, and the winds alone were edified by the remainder of Mrs. McCorkle's speech.

"Do you now think as you first did, my love, that a desire for your soul's good was the only motive which induced the nuns to desire your connection with them?" asked Mrs. Vail.

"I see it all now," Isabel replied. "But I hope," she added, with tears, "you do not believe what that dreadful woman just said, that I had taken an oath to remain, and give my property to the convent."

"Indeed I do not, my love. But I have no doubt the priest told her so, that she might think she was doing God service to get your money, or to try to interest you in behalf of the Catholic religion. These works of deceit are not the peaceable fruits of the Spirit. 'Try the spirits whether they be of God.' The Scriptures say, 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.' His Spirit teaches love to all, even to our enemies. Popery teaches revenge,— to hate, to curse, to revile all who are not its disciples,—especially such as have left its darkness for the light of the glorious gospel of the Son of God."

On her return to the house, Mrs. Vail did not begin to revile the Catholic religion, nor to ridicule the rage and bigotry of the wretched woman who so much deserved her pity. Her weapons were spiritual; and, having commended the faithful Nora to Him who pitieth the ignorant, she waited a favorable opportunity

to converse with her. Such an opportunity soon occurred; and Mrs. Vail spoke tenderly to the poor stranger, expressing sympathy in her trouble. "Nora," she said, "I have ascertained the cause of your sorrow. You need not leave us, to please either your priest or Mrs. McCorkle. You know who are your best friends, and who have done most to make you happy since you came here. You see that those to whom you would most naturally look for help and comfort, care only to draw your hard-earned wages from you. Now, tell me, Nora, if you still believe that all Protestants will lose their souls."

"'Deed, I do not, madam," replied the weeping girl. "Only for I believed God hears ye when ye pray, I wouldn't put up wid all I have to, to go to your prayers this last while. God knows they make me sthronger to bear my throubles about my poor starving people at home, and my sick sisther here. And so I tould his riverence. But, O my heart! he said I'd lose my soul for that. I, that used to be so modest, ma'am, had the bouldness to speak back to his riverence. Says I to him, 'What I heard in that house makes me love God more, and thry more to be faithful to my work. How can that send me to hell?'"

"And what did he say to that?" asked Mrs. Vail.

"'Deed, madam, I angered him so I could hardly tell what he said, only that I'd be to leave you in a week."

"And are you going to leave me, Nora?" inquired Mrs. Vail.

"Och, dear heart! what'll I do? Next Sunday he's going to read the names of all as won't give money for the new church, and ain't thrue to their religion. O! but he's the cruel man to the poor! God forgive him!"

"And yet you will confess all your sins to him, and throw away your conscience, and, I fear, risk your soul to please him?"

"Misthress Vail, I'd give the world to be born over again, o' Protestant parents; but, if I should leave the Catholic church now, there would n't be a whole bone in my body next week."

"Nora," replied the lady, "I have never asked you to leave your own church. I ask you to read — carefully to read — the Bible, your own Bible, as you call it, without the notes, which are but man's teachings. Compare the different religions which are in the land, and see which system bears the best fruit, — who are most like Christ. Go to your own room, my good girl, and, without prayer-book or rosary, lay your case, just as it is, before the pitying Redeemer. Ask him to show you the right way, and promise, with His help, to walk in it. You will be safe, also, as long as you choose to remain here. God can take care of you against all your foes. But, my dear girl, if you pray with a determination all the while to do as you think best yourself, or with doubts of God's ability to keep you, He will be dishonored and grieved,

and may leave you to your own way. This is all I have to say. I trust that God will guide you aright. And be careful not to cherish anger in your heart against Mrs. McCorkle, or any fellow-creature, else God will not hear your prayer."

Honora had long been wavering, and the dews of grace had been distilling into her heart. She was no bigot, but truly sincere before God, and anxious to know more of a faith which wrought the lovely fruits she saw in the family of Mr. Vail. The harsh and selfish manner in which Father O'Keefe treated all the poor of his flock, contrasted strangely with the tender sympathy which the village pastor manifested toward all the poor, whether of his own fold or of the priest's. She was all but persuaded to cast away all intercessors but the "one Mediator between God and men;" but the fear of the priest, and of her own country people, bound her like a spell.

Little do those who blame the indecision of the convinced papist know the trials to which he is subjected. Not only a Christian's love, but also a martyr's faith is needed in taking a stand against all his people. Friends are lost, and enemies, often revengeful ones, are gained. Great need, then, have these poor blinded strangers, of our prayers, our sympathies, and our instructions. Ridicule and harsh language never brought a soul from darkness to light; but gentleness, patience, kindness, and a manifest love for their souls, have, with God's blessing, won many to Him who is in this respect our bright Example, as well as Saviour.

Happy those who come under the influence of truly Christian employers.

Poor Honora had carried an anxious face for many days, when one morning she came in, with streaming eyes, exclaiming, "Och, I've gained a great loss, ma'am! I heard that Mrs. McCorkle broke all the glass out of the bit house on the road-side, and then moved off, nobody knows where. She quarrelled with Mr. Jones' servant-man, Tim Quirk, and he threatened to tell how she got Jim out. Tim saw her coming over the field from the priest's house, in the moonlight, and this morning she's gone wid all she had. O, but my heart's ten stone lighter for gittin' *her* off of it! And I told Tim I'd niver wear my shoes thravelling to Father O'Keefe's again; that I got a better Father nor him, in heaven, to confess to. O, but I was more afraid of her nor of death itself, ma'am! I can keep clear o' the rest of 'em, and wid God's help I will, too!"

Poor and humble though she was, Honora was not given up till after a severe struggle to subdue her. She was called for to go to mass on Sabbath morning. She was coaxed, scolded, threatened; but all in vain. Then her honor and generosity (traits on which the humblest Irish pride themselves) were called in question. A modest-looking little woman, with whom Nora had been on the best of terms, called on her one day. After a little conversation, she said that she had come to invite her to stand as godmother for her baby. Nora tried to excuse herself; but the little

woman urged her, saying, "Don't refuse now, Nora dear, if it's only to save your money; for John will put two dollars in your hands before we leave the house."

Nora denied having given a thought to the money; but in a moment she said, "And sure if I did think of it, would n't it be right for me to send all my wages to my ould father and mother at home, and to my poor sisther at the hospital?"

"The Irish folks will all say it's the money that makes you afeard to go wid us; and I don't like to hear ye abused, Nora dear."

"Well, then, let them say so!" replied the girl. "It's duty to make better use of my money than to give it to him that's richer now nor he needs to be!"

The little woman's errand was done, and she departed.

In a week or two, while the family were all out but Isabel and Nora, two Irishmen, who were round collecting funds for the new church, called on Nora. She wisely ushered them into the sitting-room where Isabel was. They stated their errand from Father O'Keefe, when Nora boldly told them, "I don't belong to your church now, and tell Father O'Keefe so!" They hinted that the names of all unfaithful Catholics were to be read out in church on the next Sabbath.

"Well, thin, I pities the poor bodies as has to sit there and hear themselves called out. But I'll niver know if he calls me out, for I'll not be there, and I'll niver ask about it."

The men rose to go,—one of them saying, in a low tone, "You'll raise your grandmother's bones out of the grave, bad luck to ye!" Nora bid them "good-by," saying, in a cheerful tone, "If ye's iver wants a friend, ye'll find one where Nora Dolan is. God forgive your sins!"

Shortly after this, Nora asked Mrs. Vail if she thought it would be right for her to remain as she was, a member of the Catholic church; as by so doing she would escape much of the abuse which she expected to receive, should she send word to Father O'Keefe that she wished to join Mr. Vail's church.

"Nora, my good girl, you must be *sincere.* No one has urged you to leave your church. You have done it in the fear of God; and Christ says, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.' We must be willing to leave father, mother, daughter, son, houses, lands, and give up even life itself, or we are not fit to dwell with Him. You will find in the New Testament, this passage, 'Blessed are ye when men persecute you, and revile you, and say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' But remember, these charges must be *false*, and all must be suffered for Christ's sake. If you outwardly remain a member of the Catholic church, you will be deceiving others, and distrusting God's power to protect you. If you have really decided to leave that church, go openly to Mr. O'Keefe, and tell him so, and give him your reasons from the

Bible. You have nothing to fear; for 'even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.'"

"'Deed, thin, you're jist right, ma'am, and my own heart knows it; but all the time something keeps whispering to my heart to hide my religion for fear I gits killed."

"That is a temptation from the enemy of your soul," said Mrs. Vail; "and when you take a decided stand he will give you up for lost, and cease to trouble you on that point. If you resist him he will flee from you."

"Well, thin, I'll go soon to the priest, and talk to him."

Honora's chain was broken. She was reviled and abused by those who, although galled by the same fetters as she had worn, lacked courage to follow her example. But, screened in a happy home, she was safe from their malice. She could well afford to be called "hiritic," or, as she passed the houses of former friends, to be hooted at as a "turncoat," an "Irish Yankee," and the like. The Bible was almost her only book when she rested from her work; and the Sabbath-school, and God's house, were her places of weekly resort.

A rich reward is the salvation of one humble soul, for those who love Christ and His service. "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

CHAPTER XIX.

Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all
SOLOMON.

"THERE goes the young doctor and his wife," exclaimed Mrs. Rose to her visitor, as she gazed out of her window. "I always think of the ministerin' sperrits when I see her or Mrs. Vail."

"Well, they have been ministerin' angels to scores of folks that 's in heaven now," replied Mrs. Fosdick, as she took the glasses from off her placid face preparatory to a conversation for which the announcement of Mrs. Rose had opened the way. "There never was such a gal as Jane Vail in Brookside before. She 's the flower o' the beautiful flock, so *I* think; but *he* always said Sam was *his* favorite. If he *ain't* so good, there is a dreadful winnin' way about him. *He* does love to hear him talk. And then, I don't wonder *he* loves the boy; for last summer, when Jim Hawkins cut his foot with the sy'e a-mowing, and the hay was a-sufferin' to be cut, and *he* was most out of his wits about his work, one morning over comes Sam, at sun-rise, in his shirt sleeves, and says he, 'Don't you want to teach me

to cut hay, Mr. Fosdick? I'm tired o' studying, and I want some exercise.' He did n't come as if he was doin' *him* a great favor, but so polite like. When he sot down to dinner he eat fat pork, and everything that farmers has in harvest-time. Why, he worked two days, fourteen hours, and they saved the hay without any more help. *He* wanted dreadfully to pay him well; but Sam laughed, and said, 'I 've eat up all my wages, I guess; and if I hav n't, I 'll wait till you make your will for the rest.' I guess *he* won 't forgit him, — he 'll git his pay 'fore long."

"I knowed," replied Mrs. Rose, "that all would come round right with Jane. Why, Miss Fosdick, such gals must git a blessin'! Why, when I was sick so long with that rheumatis fever, she used to sit here hull nights alone, and was n't sixteen years old. I'm sure 't would take a week to tell all the things she 's made for me, and the books she 's brought, and the work she 's done here. She don't go round on her tip-toes, nor act as if she was afraid of her white fingers, in poor folks' houses! I never tho't I 'd go to another weddin'; but I'm glad I went, for it 's made me feel younger and better a' ready!"

"I told *him*," replied Mrs. Fosdick, "that I was beat to see you there; but *he* said he reckoned how they sot out to have all the halt and the maimed and the blind there among the rest. Now, did n't it look beautiful to see that elegant Sam goin' after the old folks, and then a-takin' them home? I declare if he

ain't as tall as his father! It seemed as if my heart would bust when I see Miss Vail put her arms round Jane, and kiss her. I *knowed* how to feel for her, so many gals as I 'se married off, and hain't got one left to comfort *him* and me in our old age!"

Jane truly was *married;* not "married and gone," as we too often have to say of the young bride; for it was thought a great blessing to Brookside that no stranger had won the prize. The old physician being no longer able to attend to his practice, it had fallen into the hands of his son, who from day to day was finding his way to the hearts of the patients. It is not wonderful that two infirm and aged people should welcome to their silent home a young and beautiful girl whom every one loved; that they, who never knew a daughter's love, should have their hearts cheered, softened, and made better by her gentle presence and kind attentions. Jane had not gone to this new home for the sole purpose of being loved, admired, and waited on. She saw there arduous duties, which she had resolved to assume; and, forgetful of her own ease, she immediately entered upon her mission of love. The desert of old age began to bloom like the rose beneath her gentle hand, and the smiles which her kindness brought to those faded lips, were fixed there by her unwearying love. A lovely face may win, but it can never retain, a husband's heart. The unwavering Christian spirit which Jane had manifested, had led her husband not only to honor religion, but also to honor her doubly for her consist-

ency. Now, when he saw one so young yielding every thought of self, and devoting her time and strength to his beloved parents, his heart was bound by a stronger tie than ever. A blessing, for her sake, rested on the house and its inmates. The faded eye became brighter, and the ear which had long been dull now enjoyed the mellow notes resounding through the square old mansion. Another spring saw flowers, where only weeds had grown of late; and the open blinds gave a look of life to the house and all around it. The old carryall was seen every pleasant day; for Jane could drive, and thus pass away many an hour which would otherwise have been sad to her new father and mother.

O, ye, whose golden youth is wasted on life's vanities,—who flit like silly butterflies from flower to flower, —a blighted existence is yours! Self, little self, is the god you worship; and therefore, no sad home is made brighter, no weary heart sits lighter for your presence. "Beauty is deceitful, and favor is vain: but the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

In the dear old home, Jane was sadly missed. Her ways there had been so quiet and her manner so unobtrusive, when compared with Anna's bustling activity, that a stranger might have thought she accomplished very little. But when she was gone, her mother missed a thousand little nameless acts of love; and good commanding Anna found that a head to manage, and a voice to give orders, were of little avail when there were no ready hands to fulfil. Sam, too, had gone, carry-

ing with him, it seemed, half the life of the family. Isabel, however, poured forth her stores of love, and Virginia strove to amuse and assist to the extent of her ability, — making up, in a degree, the loss of the beloved ones. And then, Sam's loving letters, so like his own dear self, seemed to while away an evening every week, and to draw those fond hearts still closer round the only son and brother. Each succeeding letter brought new assurances of his desire to requite their love, by making a diligent use of the time which God had given him to prepare for the battle of life.

The "home school," now so reduced in numbers, was called "the class," and occupied but two hours. The rest of the time was devoted to general reading, useful visiting, needle-work, and that never-to-be-forgotten accomplishment, housekeeping.

Frequent letters, amusing and cheerful, came from the gay southern aunt; but presuming, gentle reader, that you would feel little interest in hearing of the balls, routs, and so forth, which graced that distant neighborhood, we have passed over their contents in silence. One item, however, may be of interest, as connected with Mrs. Latour. In one of her last letters, Mrs. Vernon, who was a tender mistress to her own slaves, and very sensitive as to the treatment of others, wrote, "You will regret, dear Isabel, to hear that Col. Belton has disgraced himself by cruelty towards that faithful old creature Jacques. You remember that splendid little silver vase which his daughter sent him from Italy, just before she died

there. It was carefully put away among other treasures, and Jacques was intrusted with the key. When, after an absence of many months, the colonel returned, the vase alone, of all his plate, was missing. Jacques, of course, was called to account, but knew nothing of it. Threats and the lash failing to extort a confession of guilt, bribes were resorted to. His master even went so far as to pledge him his liberty if he would acknowledge the theft, even should he not be able to restore the vase. But all was in vain; he still declared his innocence in the most solemn manner, calling as his witnesses all the saints in the Methodist calendar. The colonel then lost all control of himself, and abused our old favorite in a manner perfectly brutal. Your uncle was so indignant at his barbarity that he has never called on him, nor shown him the least civility, since. Rumor had some time before announced that he and Mrs. Latour were to join hands and plantations, if not hearts. As soon, however, as this affair was noised abroad, she, good tender soul, was off, no one knows whither; but probably to join some convent, to hide herself from the mortification. Her lawyer has advertised all her beautiful estate for sale; and who knows what kind of neighbors may come in place of that peaceful, inoffensive creature? Your cousin Lizzette deplores her loss, as she could always induce her to give a party, go a journey, or do whatever else she chose."

On reading this, a painful memory connected with a silver vase being presented to the Sisters of Charity,

passed over Isabel's mind. She thought that another motive than to rid herself of the gallantries of Jacques' tormentor, might have induced her to seek privacy in the convent. But her lips were sealed on the subject, and to her own Master will Mrs. Latour stand or fall.

CHAPTER XX.

> A hundred thousand welcomes! I could weep,
> And I could laugh. I 'm light and heavy;— welcome!
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

> The lovely cottage in the guardian nook
> Hath stirred thee deeply; with its own dear brook,
> Its own small pasture, almost its own sky!
>
> WORDSWORTH.

SUMMER smiled in more than its wonted beauty over the lovely hills and valleys of Brookside. The happy circle at the parsonage had been again broken. Anna had met with one of those beau-ideals of perfection, so very rare in this fallen world, but which, after all, most young ladies find; and with him her lot was cast. She had gone, according to her heart's desire, to grace an elegant city mansion; and glad was the high-spirited girl to be relieved from the thousand little vexations which follow in the train of genteel poverty.

Sam was in his third college year, laborious and hopeful, looking forward (as what young heart does not?) to a life of unbroken joy. The well-watered seeds of truth had sprung up in his heart, and he

gave promise of rewarding, by a useful life, all the sacrifices his tender parents had made for him.——

Again the severed ones had met in the dear old home to greet the returned voyagers. There was no watching of clocks, no counting of the lazy hours as they dragged away, no listening, with beating hearts, for approaching wheels, to be again and again deceived. At the appointed time *they* drove up the carriage-way, and were surrounded by their friends. Herbert had persuaded himself that he was in honor bound to see Mr. McIver, as an *invalid*, to his journey's end, before he could greet the beloved ones at home. Such honorable motives does the young heart often claim for itself, when really gratifying its own most ardent desires.

Isabel could scarcely believe that the healthy, gray-haired gentleman who folded her in his arms was her father. Anguish, murmuring, and illness, had, indeed, rapidly changed his raven locks; but the spirit of reconciliation had, ere this, given to his eye an expression, and to his cheek a glow, which robbed the silver hair of its otherwise saddening effect. When the right time comes, white locks become the face, and add beauty to the countenance. Black hair is, to an aged face, an incongruity as unnatural as would be a rose-tinted cheek with a deeply furrowed brow.

Isabel wept freely, but her tears were those of joy. With her father was also restored to her another friend, dear to her heart. She could not remember the time when she began to love Herbert, for she had always

done so. He it was who led her tenderly when she learned to walk; he who made all his boyish sports gentler and simpler that she might share them; he who trained for her the golden oriole and mocking-bird,—who shared her girlish joys, and laughed away her childish fears. Little wonder that her cup of joy ran over, for it was twice full at this blest reünion. The clouds with which nature had shaded her spirit had given way beneath a heavenly shining, and her, whom Herbert left a frail and melancholy girl, he met again a strong, noble, hopeful woman.

Virginia manifested her joy in a less romantic way than by weeping. She laughed, jumped, and clapped her hands, and, when she could get near her father, half smothered him with kisses.

When the happy father was allowed time, he expressed his tenderest thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Vail for their love to his children, and for the wisdom with which they had allured Isabel from the snare into which she had so nearly fallen. "I can never half reward you for all you have done; but *God surely will.*" And well was his prophecy fulfilled; for He who rewardeth the giver of a cup of cold water, remembered the *mother's love* and the *father's prayers* which had been bestowed upon the motherless girls.

After a few days at Brookside, during which Herbert and Sam had become warm friends, Mr. McIver reminded the former that duty to his family required him to leave the parsonage and seek his home.

"But, you surely will accompany me, will you not, sir?" asked the young man.

"If the poet was right when he said, ''tis home where'er the heart is,' I must abide here a while," replied Mr. McIver, smiling.

"Then, by the same reasoning, sir," answered Herbert, "*I, too*, shall remain; and Sam, if I'm not mistaken," he added, looking archly at him, "will choose not to return to his books;—but this will give Mrs. Vail a larger family than she cares for. I will wait a few days, if you will then accompany me south with the girls."

"O, Herbert! You should be at home now; this is the day of rest for me, but of toil for you and Sam. What are *you* doing in your hours of leisure?" he asked, turning to Sam; "reading law, medicine, or what?"

"Building castles in the air, sir, and laying out the *grounds*," replied he, gravely.

"Ah! these golden dreams are very deceitful, Sam; they melt before they reach the heat of the furnace."

"My dreams are not of gold, sir," returned Sam. "Indeed, I despise the man who has a passion for wealth. My ambition has always been for *happiness*, and not for gold!"

"Sager heads than yours, Sam," returned the gentleman, "have thought happiness and wealth synonymous terms; or, at least, that the former cannot exist without the latter."

"Then they knew less than I do," replied Sam.

"My life has been a very happy one, thus far, and I'm sure it has not been made so by gold."

"What do you mean to do with yourself when you leave college?" asked Mr. McIver. But, seeing that Sam hesitated to reply, he added, smiling, "Perhaps I'm on forbidden ground; you may wish to keep your plans secret till you burst upon the admiring world in all your brilliancy."

"No, sir," replied Sam, with unusual gravity; "I've no desire to dazzle the world. My ambition is to be a scientific and practical farmer. I think it a foolish idea that many parents have, that, to make a gentleman of a son, he must needs be a professional man. Thus, all they can spare is lavished on one boy, and the others are robbed of all but the most common advantages. He is sent to college, studies a profession, dresses in fine cloth, and comes home to laugh to scorn his brothers, who, though but half educated, are, in many cases, nobler men than he. When farmers educate all their sons then *farming* may become one of the learned professions. As it is, it seems to me the noblest path a man can take through life."

Mr. McIver, Herbert, and Mr. Vail, smiled at Sam's earnestness; but he, nothing daunted, continued, "It may be some time before I invite you to eat strawberries and cream with me; but, after teaching two years, I hope to begin felling trees."

"Where *are* the trees you mean to fell, Sam?" asked Mr. Vail.

'On the headland which overlooks the stream running through old Mr. Fosdick's farm. I have the refusal of that farm for three years," said Sam.

"O, Sam! what a ridiculous idea! I thought my boy had more common sense than that," exclaimed the father. "The old gentleman is in his second childhood, or he would never have made such a bargain with you."

"Not so much a child, either," replied Sam. "I have cut hay there three summers; ploughed, planted, and reaped with him; sometimes merely to help him, and sometimes to earn a little money in vacation. He says *I'll make a farmer*. He told me yesterday he wished me to take the farm on *sheers*, as soon as I was let out of college, and pay for it when I could; the heirs will be in no need of the money if he should die. He will not sell it unless on condition that the old house shall be kept in repair as long as it can be, and then not *torn* down. He will remain in it as long as he lives."

"Do you intend to reside in it, also, my son?" asked Mr. Vail, with a smile of quiet humor.

"No, sir; when the old folks need it no longer, it will do for one of my men to live in. I shall build on the headland, where the old English elms stand."

"*One of my men!*" repeated Anna, who had been listening eagerly to Sam's day-dream. "Men of straw, working an aërial farm! O, Sam, Sam!"

The listeners laughed; but Sam could afford to be

laughed at, and only replied, "I am in earnest about it."

"But, look here, farmer," said Herbert, "would you not need some stock on your place, to make it profitable?"

"Certainly; — oxen, cows, poultry, &c."

"And a horse, I suppose?"

"Yes, two of them," replied Sam; "a good strong fellow, for work, and a carriage-horse, gentle enough for Virginia to dri—, O! I ask your pardon," he exclaimed, blushing deeply, and turning to his cousin; "I was thinking aloud!"

Of course this caused a hearty laugh. Poor Virginia, who had evidently assisted in drawing the plans, was not prepared for this blunder, and tears of vexation filled her eyes.

"Words have such swift wings, Virgie," he said, "that it is impossible to get them back if once they fly. But, it 's no matter; these are all our friends, and they would have to know it some time. This need not prevent my having that *private interview* with your father, when I get an opportunity."

"O, Sam, you cruel boy, to tease her so!" said Jane; for she had not charity to believe Sam had made a blunder, but thought he was at his old tricks again.

"I shall feel a deep and sincere sympathy," remarked Anna, "for the people who buy your butter, Sam, if Virgie is dairy-woman."

"I should think you knew Sam too well to blush at anything he says, my love," said Mrs. Vail. "We

of course would not take him in earnest, for such a thing is quite out of the question. We have often expressed our opinion that cousins are nearly enough connected without marrying."

Poor Virginia only blushed the more deeply.

"You know *I* am not a *real* cousin to the girls, aunt," remarked Herbert with a satisfied air.

"I know it," replied the lady, "and I am glad you are not. It is quite out of the question for cousins to marry."

"Not all out of the question, mother dear," remarked Sam, looking very resolute; "it 's no fault of ours that we're cousins."

"Do you remember, my son, the conversation we had on this subject, two years ago?" asked the lady.

"Yes, mother, I remember it well; and now, if you all please, we 'll drop the subject. Come," he said, rising, and taking his mother's hand, "let us take a walk to rest ourselves; for, from some cause or other, I feel very tired, and the air in the room seems close."

"I should think, if there was a spark of modesty in you, brother," said Anna, "you would feel a little nervous after such a blunder as you just made."

When Mr. and Mrs. Vail were alone with Mr. McIver, he, greatly to their surprise, advised them to raise no further objections to the engagement between the cousins, as he saw it was too late now to break it without causing great unhappiness. He said, moreover, that he would purchase Mr. Fosdick's farm, if it was thought a good bargain, and put a man on it

for the present, till Sam should finish his studies. He was highly pleased with Sam's sensible ideas in choosing a *profession*, as he chose to call it. They visited the worthy old farmer on the following day, without the knowledge of the young people. They stood upon the headland, Sam's chosen building-spot. The dark blue hills stretched out before them, and behind lay a deep forest, whose broad old trees boasted of a hundred years. The stream below murmured and babbled past them, carrying its bright waters to the sleek herds which stood drinking in the distance. Mr. McIver, after gazing around some time in silence, remarked that he never heard so many birds singing at one time in so public a place.

"There is a reason for it," answered Mr. Vail; "this worthy old man has never allowed a bird to be shot on the place. Some one told him once that if he did not put up some scare-crows, and spread nets for the birds, they would steal his grain. 'No, they won't *steal* it,' he replied, 'for I give it to them. God meant they should have something to eat, or he would never have made them and sent them here.' Besides, he insists that they guard the fruit from insects, and thus more than earn their living. If it costs something to keep them, he says, he will do it for the sake of their music. These are just Sam's ideas; he never cared for gunning or fishing, as most boys do. There are several points of character in which he and father Fosdick agree. I hope my son may make as good a man as he."

When the subject of purchasing the farm was broached to Sam, he cheerfully relinquished his right, hoping that Mr. McIver might thereby be induced to remove to the north, and become a neighbor to his father.

CHAPTER XXI.

"There 's ne'er a bad penny, but aye it will return."

MR. MCIVER and Sam were making some inquiries in town, one day, for a farmer and his wife to take charge of a place in the country, when suddenly the door of the employment-office was opened, and a bushy red head, adorned with an unnecessarily ugly face, was thrust in. A harsh voice cried out, "I say, misther, are ye afther wantin' a stout boy for the counthry?"

"How old is your boy, sir?" asked the man of the office, taking his pen from behind his ear, to note down the facts in the case.

"As old as meself, sir; I 'm the boy as wants the place!" replied the head.

"What kind of work can you do?"

"I can do iverything, sir,— and more too, if a gintleman wants it done. I can take good care of horses and crathurs; I can plough, plant, hoe, rake, chop, reap, drive carriages, wait upon ladies —"

"Take breath, my friend," said the office man, "you 've plenty of time before you."

Sam could not be deceived, and, stepping towards the head (for the body was still in the street), he asked, "What is your name, my friend?"

"I'm one Jeemes McCorkle, sir, from Ballygormon, just convanient to —some big place, the name I forget just now, — but it's in Ireland. I've been to sea this two or three years agone; but, faith, I'd rather work harder on dhry land nor to be eaten by sharks. But I was a good brave sailor for all that, sir."

"How would you like to go to Brookside, to work on a farm?" asked Sam.

"To Brookside, is it?" and his countenance fell. He looked earnestly in Sam's face, as if to see if he could be trusted with a secret; then he recognized the countenance, and, springing into the office, head, body and all, he exclaimed, "Sure you are not his riverence's young gintleman?"

"Had you forgotten *me*, Jim, your old friend?" asked Sam, with a pitiful expression sitting ludicrously on his face.

"O, masther Sam!" he cried, grasping his hand, "ye were a mere gossoon when I went away; but the ould woman, sure she'd murther me if I wint wid ye!"

Sam reässured Jim, by telling him that the last that was heard of her, she was following the contractors on the new county rail-road from station to station, keeping a shanty boarding-house, and making money.

"Young man," called out the office-keeper, "this gentleman is in search of a farmer and dairy-woman. Have you a wife?"

"Faith, I hav n't thin," said Jim, "for I niver

needed one before. But I can git one at any corner o' the street. Sure I 've b. jist now talkin' to a rale dacent girl. Her father came out in the steerage of the ship. He lost his wife in Liverpool, jist before we started, and the heart was broke in him. I was the boy as made his gruel, and boiled his pratees, all the voyage, and when the girl heard o' it she offered to pay me. I would n't take her money, and she said she hoped she 'd find some way to pay me. I 'll go straight back and tell her I 'll take herself in pay." The people in the office laughed; but the keeper advised Jim to wait till he saw whether he had a place for himself, before he engaged help to do his work.

After some conversation, the gentlemen agreed to meet Jim at the same place in the afternoon, and give him an answer.

Sam had always pitied Jim when a boy, and felt that he might be saved with proper treatment. He now descanted so warmly on his kindness of heart and industrious habits that, notwithstanding his early faults, it was thought best to give him a trial, under the guidance of Mr. Fosdick. There was rough work enough for one man for a year, should he know nothing of farming.

When this decision was made known to Jim, he expressed great joy, saying, "Sure, I 'll show his riverence, and all the good people at Brookside, that I 'm not the same Jim McCorkle as lived there years ago. I asked the young girl would she marry me, and she said, 'dade she would n't, nor any other man

as had n't good larnin' and dacint bringin' up. 'But,' says she, 'I rispict ye, for all that; and if ye will git me a good place in the counthry, where I can board my father in some dacent Irish family, I 'd like to take him near ye, for I 've nobody now to look afther him, and he 's very sad for your goin' away, as ye was so kind to him on the sea."

"Well, Jim," said Sam, "we can get along a while without a dairy-maid."

"Maybe Nora herself would have me?" said Jim, inquiringly.

But his employers were not so deeply interested in his matrimonial pursuits as he imagined, Mrs. Fosdick having offered to attend to the dairy a year. Having settled their business, they departed, taking with them the new incumbent.

CHAPTER XXII.

All 's well that ends well.
SHAKSPEARE.

SHOULD you visit Brookside now, gentle reader, you would never recognize the old Fosdick homestead. True, the quaint little house is still there, beneath its old guardian elms; but it is repaired and whitewashed, and called the "farmer's house." On the top of the hill, overlooking the bright stream, stands a neat Gothic cottage, surrounded with marks of the taste and refinement of those who dwell there. Virginia and Sam are no longer mere cousins; for the eloquence of the latter overcame the well-grounded objections of his parents, and forced them to exchange a beloved niece for a daughter. Sam has the same labor-loving, labor-honoring spirit as when he chopped wood with Jim McCorkle, and cut hay with Mr. Fosdick. He is not at all ashamed if city friends or college-mates find him at work in his farm attire. Many a richer home shelters heavy hearts; but these naturally happy spirits do not allow small things to darken their sky. They are determined to be as happy as they can be, and to use God's gifts in making others so.

Reader, have you not become sufficiently interested

in our young farmer to pardon him for marrying his cousin?

Jim has proved himself worthy of the confidence his master placed in him, and is now head man on the farm, and occupies the house hallowed by the life and death of those worthy saints who called it home so many years. A tidy little woman keeps all neat within, — attends to the dairy, and guides by her words and smiles of encouragement the headstrong Jim. This little woman, whom he now addresses as "Misthress," is none but good Nora. After declaring that she was too old to marry such a "*gossoon*" as Jim,— that she could n't think of taking a "*far-downer*,"— that she would n't marry the son of such a mother,— and, more than all, that she could n't, on any account, leave Mr. and Mrs. Vail; — after all this, she did marry Jim, and went to her new home *quite as a matter of duty;* for, she said, some one must marry him to encourage him to keep out of his old ways; and, changed lad as Jim McCorkle was, she did n't think anybody else *would* marry such an ugly-looking man; so she saw no other way but just to take him herself.

> "There swims no goose, however gray, but, soon or late,
> She 'll find some honest gander for her mate."

The news of Jim's good luck did not fail to reach his mother, who was keeping a shanty boarding-house on a new branch railroad some ten miles distant. The boards for a new dépôt were to be brought from the sawmill at Brookside; and, seated on the box of the

lumber-wagon, arrayed in her best, Mrs. McCorkle set forth to form the acquaintance of her new daughter-in-law. On her arrival she stepped into the mill a moment, when, after boasting that Mr. Jeemes McCorkle was her son, and his wife some great lady, what was her dismay to be answered by the man of the mill, "Why, my good woman, Jim's wife is that Irish gal, Nora, that lived so long to parson Vail's." "Holy Mother!" exclaimed the widow, raising both hands. Then, turning to the teamster, she cried, "Sure, misther, I don't feel very well, and I'll not go to my son's, but ride back wid ye." And so she returned to her shanty home, where Barney Quigley reigned supreme; for it is but justice to say that her spirit was subdued, and her temper chastened. The credit of this reform Barney takes to himself, as, on her first attempt to show her 'thority, he raised the pickaxe to her, which had a most soporific effect on her belligerent faculties. Nora insists upon Jim's sending his mother a barrel of flour and a pig every winter, for "a mother 's a mother."

The poor old Irishman to whom Jim showed so much kindness on the sea, finds a home with them, and does such light work on the farm as suits his inclination. His dutiful, pious, and intelligent daughter, Mary Flynn, is the faithful domestic and humble companion of Mrs. Vail, now bereft of all her children.

The vail of superstition has been drawn from the eyes of all these poor strangers, and every Sabbath

they may be seen, with others of their nation, listening to the truth as it is in Jesus. The kindness they have received, and the holy teachings to which they have listened, have been blessed of God to win them over to a purer faith.

The dear old southern home could not be given up; too many tender ties bound it to the heart of its possessor. There Mr. McIver, cheerful, useful and happy, passes his time with Herbert and Isabel, who were married soon after his return.

Isabel fills her mother's place, as a comforter to the distressed, and a guide to the ignorant. The deep trials through which she passed in her early days, and the grace which brought her through with unsullied heart, have given strength and symmetry to her Christian character. She lives unlike the butterflies of fashion by whom she is surrounded; — seeking not alone her own good, but also that of all, — loosening by her blessed influence the bonds which at Brookside she learned to abhor, and enlightening those immortal minds which the laws of a Christian country enshroud in darkness.

FINIS.

